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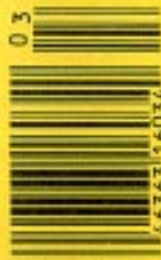
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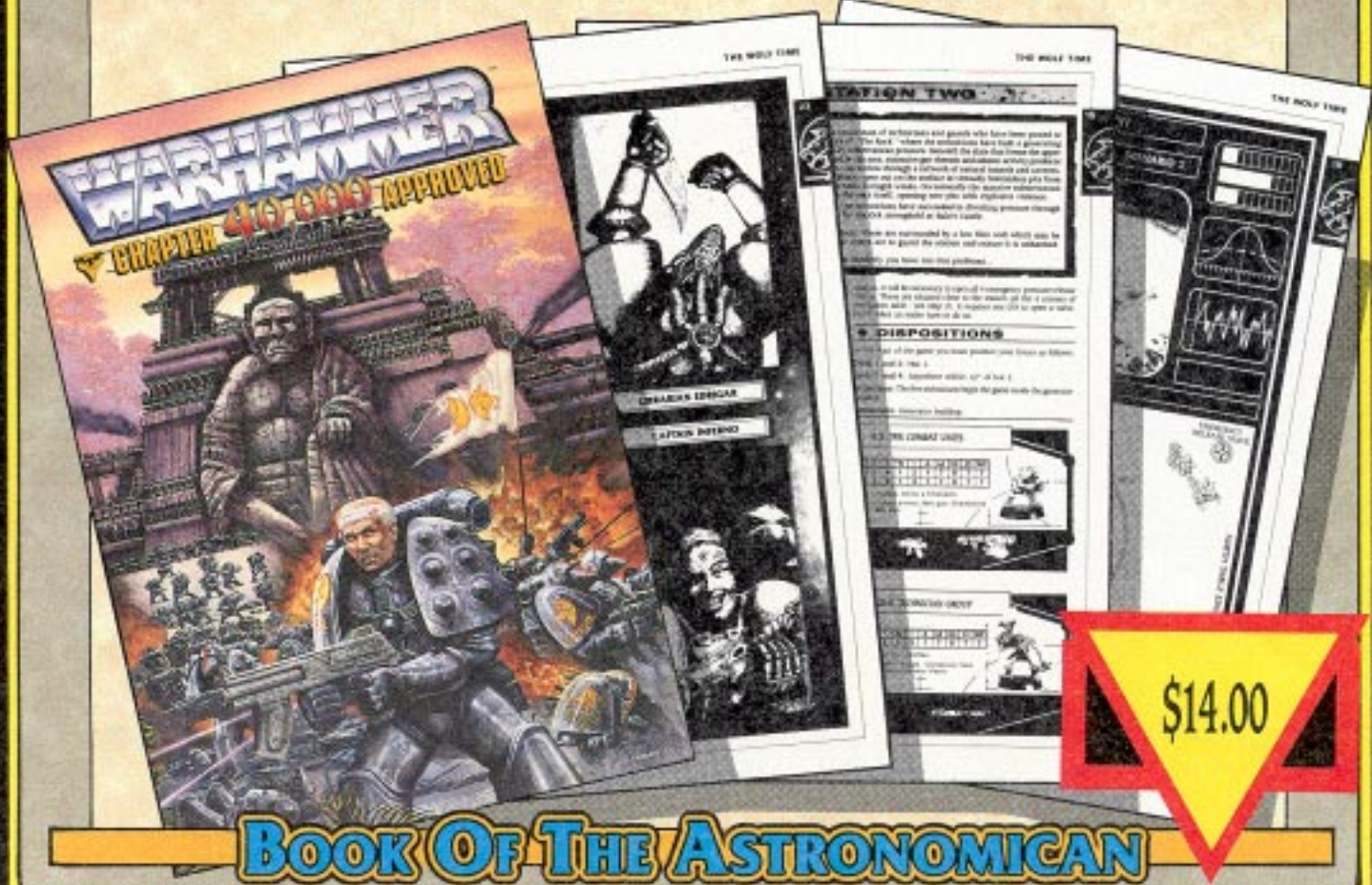
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## COVER

Our cover is entitled: "What Geraldo Rivera wished he had found in Al Capone's vault," which just about says it all. This painting won an award at the 1987 Norwescon's Altercon convention, and is the combined work of two artists: Rodayne Esmay and David Kern. Rodayne says he and David are charter members of the Happy Valley Space Academy (a local artists' group). Thanks, guys!

# LETTERS

## Phantom phantoms

Dear Dragon:

I loved the special attraction in issue #126. However, I did catch a miscount in Vince Garcia's article. He only listed 30 undead. The missing one is the phantom.

Example: The party settles down for the night on a wide field. Later on, the characters are awakened by loud war cries as two armies charge into battle around them. What the PCs don't know is that all the warriors are 300-year-old phantoms.

I also have a question about "Hearts of Darkness" by Tom Moldvay. On page 17 of issue #126, Mr. Moldvay implies that there might be a connection between werewolves and vampires. According to all the information I have (mostly from movies), werewolves are nearly immortal while vampires are dead. These states seem opposed to each other and, as such, lycanthropes and vampires should be enemies under normal circumstances.

As long as the subject of werewolves is up, I have a question about the MARVEL SUPER HEROES® game article by Douglas Lent. Since Jack Russell is a supernatural werewolf, is he contagious? I've been wondering about this ever since he managed to claw Iron Man through his helmet.

Douglas Burik  
Cincinnati OH

*Our count of the undead in Vince's article shows 31 types (we listed sheet phantoms and sheet ghouls in the same heading on page 32 of that issue). The article pins down a few monsters not previously known to be undead (such as the crypt thing and vampiric ixitxachtli), but phantoms are stated in the Monster Manual II to be neither alive nor undead. Your example is appreciated, however.*

*Tom Moldvay used more traditional sources of information than modern movies in writing his article. A number of European legends and folktales connect vampires with werewolves in some manner as Tom notes on page 17 of that issue. Whether you use this information in your fantasy campaign or not is up to you — but it makes exciting reading.*

*We checked with Jeff Grubb, and he said Jack Russell's lycanthropy was the result of a supernatural curse placed on his genetic line, starting with his ancestor Gregory Russoff. As such, this lycanthropy cannot be transmitted in the same fashion as "classical" cases of lycanthropy, and is confined to Russoff's male descendants. This information comes from The Official Handbook of the Marvel Universe® — which, interestingly enough, also makes the vampire-werewolf connection you mentioned above.*

## DRAGONLANCE® chess?

Dear Dragon:

I know that you are very busy, but I came up with an idea: a DRAGONLANCE® chess set. I figure even though the chance of you producing such a thing is slim, I thought what the heck. I have come up with a list of what the pieces might include:

	White (good)	Black (evil)
King	Tanis	Ariakas
Queen	Laurana	Kitiara
Bishops	Caramon	Lord Soth
	Raistlin	?
Knights	Flint	Toede
	Sturm	Verminaard
Rooks	Tower of the High Clerist	Temple of Neraka
	Dragon of Ergoth	Flying Citadel
Pawns	Warrior on dragon	Draconian

The board would be a map of Ansalon with important spots labeled.

Mike Strane  
Pittsburgh PA

*Though TSR, Inc., has no plans to produce a DRAGONLANCE chess set, we are producing the DRAGONLANCE board game, which will be released in July. The game features 3D aerial combat, numerous plastic playing pieces, and fast, easy-to-learn rules. Those who want to try making a DRAGONLANCE chess set for their own use might try using 25mm miniatures for playing pieces.*

## A brief message

Dear Dragon:

Robert: "How many gamers does it take to change a light bulb?"

H.P.: "I don't know, how many gamers does it take to change a light bulb?"

Robert: "Eighteen; three to build a pyramid to the socket, three to devour all chips, soda, popcorn, and stray house pets, one to put in the bulb, and the rest to argue about a six-month-old DM call."

Michael Cecil  
Belleville IL

Thanks.

## Oasis

One of the forces that guided my path into games, gaming, and ultimately to TSR, Inc., was the Hobbitt Hobby Shop in Fayetteville, N.C. I was stationed at Ft. Bragg with the U.S. Army in the late 1970s, and eventually found myself in that shop, wondering if the rows and rows of fantasy figures there had to do with the D&D® game I had heard about. I asked the manager about it — and my doom was sealed.

A good hobby shop has a variety of gaming goods, a location with lots of free-spending gamers (military bases, college campuses, and malls work well), stable suppliers, etc. But a legendary hobby shop has something more: people who genuinely care about gamers. The very existence of such people benefits the whole gaming field.

The Hobbitt Hobby Shop was legendary, and I owe a great debt to Al and Feliet, who special-ordered miniatures and games for me, let me display my *Star Trek* models in the store, and directed me to other gamers in the area who were running campaigns. The shop had display cases for miniatures and models that gamers created, and always had a good word for your work — even in cases like mine, in which the modeler's enthusiasm exceeded his skills. ("Your orcs are certainly the most colorful ones I've ever seen," Al once told me.)

I was pleased to recently learn that "the Hobbitt" is still around ("Our seventeenth year," said Al), and it put me in mind of other legendary hobby shops I've known and loved. The Rusty Scabbard still sits only a few blocks from the University of Kentucky campus in Lexington, Ky. The Something To Do shops hang on in Louisville. Napoleon's in Milwaukee is still filled with games. Others exist, but they are few and far between.

If you find such a shop, let the people there know you appreciate them. Al and Feliet — thank you! I was lucky to have found your oasis.



Ω

# The World Gamers Guide

With this issue of DRAGON® Magazine, "The World Gamers Guide" will come to a close. No further listings will be taken. Our increased distribution and circulation worldwide are responsible; because of the great increase in international sales, we will soon not be able to cope with the increase in WGG entries with our small staff size.

However, we are always open to submissions for the "Letters" and "Forum" columns, as well as regular gaming articles, and we welcome contributions from anywhere in the world. We also encourage gamers to organize gaming clubs, set up conventions, and use the resources of their local game and hobby stores.

This column had a long run and a good one. We wish all gamers across the world the best this year. Keep gaming!

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CC: CALL OF CTHULHU® game  
CH: CHAMPIONS™ game  
CW: CAR WARS® game  
DD: D&D® game  
GW: GAMMA WORLD® game  
MSH: MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ game  
OA: AD&D Oriental Adventures system  
P: PARANOIA™ game  
RQ: RUNEQUEST® game  
SF: STAR FRONTIERS® game  
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SL: SQUAD LEADER® game  
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# FORUM

In the "Forum," issue #121, Brian Chase referred to an article I wrote for the November (#115) issue entitled "The Ecology of the Harpy — Songs of Beauty." In his letter, he disagreed with the statement I made that male and female harpies are very much alike, especially in appearance, except in reproductive roles. In summary, he stated that harpies are parthenogenetic (i.e., they clone themselves rather than produce young from a male-fertilized, female-produced egg). However, a harpy could mate with a human male "to improve the gene pool of the race." Males produced from this union would be killed shortly after birth; females would be improved with better strength, fighting, and perhaps more spells. A female born of a bardic father might also have an improved harpy-song. Mr. Chase also said that D'driand the sage must have been *charmed* to give Colin the ranger such faulty information. Though I see the reasoning behind the argument, I do not entirely agree and stand by my earlier statement that harpies can be either male or female, that the reproductive process is a simple mating, and that there is little difference in looks. Perhaps I was not specific enough and, with the help of a friend, I will try to clear the matter up.

Harpies are avian and humans are mammals. Such a cross would not only require the bypassing of species, but of genus, family, and order. Interbreeding within the species and sometimes the genus are possible, but not without risk. In some cases, such as the breeding of a horse and a donkey to produce a mule, the resulting offspring is healthy but sterile. Such offspring, if this was the case, would only be improved for a single individual, as even cloning would not be possible. We are not entirely clear if interbreeding among members of the same family is possible, but we do know that interbreeding from class to class is impossible.

This also assumes that the harpy and the human have the same number of chromosomes. There are good examples of devastating birth defects due to a difference of even a small *piece* of a chromosome! A difference would possibly negate chances of successful fertilization and if not, would surely either kill the fetus before it was completely developed or produce one that would not live more than a very short time after birth, either dying on its own or being killed by its mother or nest-mates.

Just for the sake of argument, we will assume that harpies are mammals (which is not our belief) and that they share the same number of chromosomes as humans. Humans, elves, and orcs are all bipedal, with two arms, two legs, two hands, two feet, 10 fingers, 10 toes, etc., with minor size and feature differences. Interbreeding is possible (though the inability of elves and orcs to mate successfully is tribute to the fact that while they are close enough to humans to mate with them, there are enough differences between the two to render it impossible — a prime example of genetic selectivity). Harpies, on the other hand, have wings, feathers, bristly hair of the same material that the

feathers are made of, birds' legs, and talons. The structure of the back alone is vastly different to accommodate the wings that support the body in flight. Not only are the structures different, but the bones are as well. They would have to be lighter than those of a human or else the wings would have to be far larger to accommodate the extra weight. Nor do harpies have the same set of vital organs, etc. If physiologies for elves and orcs do not allow for interbreeding, why would a harpy and a human, vastly different as they are, breed successfully?

Even if magic could be used to overcome all of the natural impossibilities (harpies are, after all, a magical race), there would be no guarantee that mating with a human would produce a superior harpy. The idea assumes that the creature would inherit the best of both parents, and this does not always happen. If such a union was even remotely possible, there could be as many detriments as improvements. One that leaps to mind immediately is that while the crossbred harpy might be stronger and better at fighting (and perhaps more intelligent), it would undoubtedly lose some of its inherent magic. An example of this is the alu-demon, which is certainly not as powerful as a succubus when it comes to magic. If the *charm* ability of the harpy is diminished — even if the harpy is stronger, fiercer, and smarter — it would not leave a sufficient attack mode to allow it to survive very long. Humans, unlike harpies, are not inherently magical, and if a harpy is looking for a big, strong, hero-type, chances are that he wouldn't be a magic-user anyway. (A human's magic is learned, not inherited.) The harpy/human offspring might also lose most, if not all, of its ability to fly, having smaller wings and heavier bones. A stronger, smarter, fiercer harpy without much of its magic and limited to the ground or short "hops" in the air would quickly become someone's lunch. We also do not think that a bardic father would help the harpy's song much, either. Like magic, singing is an acquired skill. Although the talent for singing could be inherited, harpy vocal chords are not adapted for human speech. Even with the human influence, they probably still would not be entirely adapted. The *charm* of a harpy and the *charm* of a bard are two entirely different types of *charm*, anyway.

So why do harpies have humanoid faces and upper bodies? Magical intervention is the clue. The harpy's *charm/illusion* is not as powerful in respect to visual illusion, and requires a template. In other words, if harpies looked like normal buzzards, they would have great difficulty conjuring up an illusion of a beautiful human female, with nothing to work from. However, since harpies have the face and the upper body all they need to do is use their magic to gloss over the ugliness a little and improve what's already there. The vision does not usually go any farther than accentuating what is there, except in certain rare individuals. The bird's body and wings are still there, but the wings appear more graceful and the feath-

ers appear white, silver, or gold.

If there are indeed male harpies, why don't they appear as men? Simple: Adventurers, merchants, and other travelers are usually men who would be more distracted by a lovely female, even if she were half-bird (perhaps divine). Even a female adventurer would more often be sympathetic to a woman in distress. Male harpies, like females, have to live in the real world, and a harpy that could not effectively lure would not live very long. Both sexes developed "faces" and upper bodies as the blueprints for the spell.

Getting to reproduction, it is almost impossible to tell a male from a female avian by looking at reproductive organs unless you get *extremely* close (and only a dead harpy would let you get *that* close!). A harpy's reproductive organs, like those of most birds, are not external. Female and male birds are usually distinguished by their coloration and there is no sexual differentiation for coloring in harpies. Males and females, having developed the same adaptations for *charming*, and having no difference in coloration or other external indications of gender, do look the same.

Harpies mate as birds do, and usually do so deep within their lairs where few others dare to go. We can see where Samanthalus got the idea that they were parthenogenetic — its a common misconception among sages today, given the harpy's lack of external sexual characteristics and the fact that few men have ever seen harpies mate. We can even see where he got the idea that harpies mate with humans (but that is merely an old wives' tale to frighten people). Those who have dared to study the harpy more closely have discovered the truth.

And D'driand wasn't *charmed* — he was just a dirty rat.

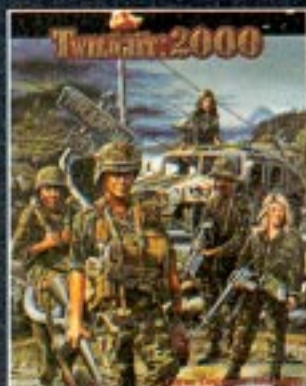
Barbara Curtis  
Watertown NY  
William French  
Potsdam NY

I am writing to comment on Alan Ristow's letter on banded mail in DRAGON® issue #123. He is correct in saying that the type of armor known in textbooks as "banded mail" did not exist and is infeasible. However, the armor mentioned in the AD&D® game, particularly the description of it in the DMG is not "banded mail." The AD&D game books mistakenly apply the term "mail" to nearly all types of armor, when it should in fact be only used for chain mail and ring mail. A better nomenclature might be to replace the word "mail" in the names with "armor" with the exception of "plate mail" which should perhaps be called "plate and mail" or "transition armor" (as it was transitional between mail and plate). The banded armor described in the DMG seems to resemble the Roman Lorica Segmentata, worn over light mail and padding. Such armor, with most of its bulk and protection concentrated on the torso and little on the legs (unlike some others which have greaves and other encumbrances), would probably slow down the wearer no more than chain mail. It should therefore retain the movement base of 9" and perhaps be reclassified as "fairly bulky" due to the fact that it would allow relatively free movement of the limbs.

On the subject of armor, I would like to bring up the armor used by the svirfnebli (as described in the FIEND FOLIO® tome), which does not seem to fit the system of armor previously defined, and might be an interesting addition. It is described as a leather jack (sleeveless tunic) sewn with mithral-steel rings, worn over fine chain mail. Previous rules have not covered the

# Twilight: 2000

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The *Small Arms Guide* is a sourcebook for *Twilight: 2000* which contains a consolidated listing of every personal firearm in the basic game, as well as additional material of interest to both players and referees. In response to player requests, the single entry for the generic pistols (such as the 9mmP Auto) of the basic rules has now been expanded to include every major handgun type in use by the year 2000, ranging from the German Luger and "Broomhandle" Mauser pistols of the early 1900s to the advanced materials and technology of the Austrian Glock 17. Increased coverage of both military and civilian rifles is also presented in the *Small Arms Guide*. Submachinegun coverage now includes all major types, from the Tommygun of the 1920s to modern suppressed designs, such as the H&K MP5 and Ingram MAC-10.

Each weapon entry contains an illustration of that particular firearm and full details for the incorporation of the weapon into the game. \$7.00.

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wearing of two types of armor together, but could surely be extended to cover this. The armor-class decrease caused by wearing the mithral-ring jack in addition to chain mail can be derived by comparing the standard armor classes of chain mail armor (AC 5), ring/studded armor and shield (AC 6), svirfnebli (AC 2 wearing chain mail and jack), and surface gnomes (AC 5 wearing ring/studded and shield). It can be seen that the effect of a mithral-ring jack would be +2 (assuming surface and deep gnomes have the same bonus to armor class due to size, dexterity, etc.). Of course, the jack could be worn on its own or could be made of rings of different metals.

I suggest the following system: The jack should have a base armor class of 8 (if worn on its own) or +1 (if worn with chain mail) if it is made of meteoritic iron (the lowest quality metal possible to make rings of the required quality). If the rings are made from mithral steel, there would be an additional bonus of +1; if adamantite steel is used, the bonus is +2. The jack would have an encumbrance of 10 lbs., be nonbulky, and be worn only over ordinary or elfin chain mail. It could be worn by thieves, but at the same penalty as elfin chain mail (or as studded, if worn with elfin chain).

Timothy Makinson  
Dunedin, New Zealand

I am writing in defense of banded mail armor which was undeservedly slighted in DRAGON issue #123's "Forum." I strongly disagree with Mr. Ristow's opinions on the matter, and, yes, Mr. Ristow, I am quite knowledgeable of armor types, uses, designs, etc.

In his letter, Mr. Ristow states: "Banded mail is a type of armor known only in illustrations. . . ." Might I point out that the AD&D game is a game of *fantasy*, not fact, as that letter makes it out to be. Case in point: Dragons were also found only in drawings, paintings, and stories. This can be said of all fantasy-type monsters in books.

Mr. Ristow also states: "In my campaign, I have banished banded mail. . . . My players must be content with . . . banded mail in pictures and drawings." As a DM, this tells me that you are not playing the AD&D game, but only trying to copy history (as evidenced by your letter). But Gary Gygax said it best in the *Players Handbook* (p. 7): "ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS is a fantasy game of role playing which relies on the imagination of participants, for it is certainly make-believe."

There is one thing on which I do agree with Mr. Ristow: the fact that banded mail armor does not exist in the real world. Still, there is no reason for it not to exist in a fantasy game such as the AD&D game.

Daryl Short  
Riverside CA


Lately, I have read a lot about assassins and how they disrupt game play. I find this point sadly wrong. First, I would like to point out that I have only played the assassin class once, and I did enjoy it. But I don't think it's the assassin that's the problem here; I think it's more the people who play them. I have seen two people play two different ways. One spied on a king's castle for a neighboring country, then killed the king to break up the leadership, but only after the person asking for his service raised the

price to a level that the assassin thought was fair. When adventuring in a group, this same assassin used his abilities only when no one was watching. (What assassin in his right mind would want anyone to know what he is?) Likewise, he would not do anything to another PC or NPC that might reveal his true identity. The other person would do none of the above. In fact, the only time he would assassinate was when it was another PC. This spoiled everyone's fun to the point that no one wanted to play. I think that the DM should read the *DMG* (p. 110) on handling troublesome players and not hold the assassin class responsible.

Matt Wright  
Spring Arbor MI

Tom Moldvay's grand review of vampire lore (issue #126) sent delicious chills up my spine. Vampire fiction has long been a major vehicle for writers dealing with the theme of sacred vs. profane love. And Mr. Moldvay is absolutely right — people in our nonmagical world have probably been "vampires." In addition to the suggestions in the article, our "vampires" and "werewolves" may both have suffered from congenital erythropoietic porphyria. Victims of this autosomal recessive enzyme defect suffer a painful illness with extreme sensitivity to light. Even small amounts of sun exposure cause sloughing of the skin, leading to hideous deformity. Victims' teeth acquire a bright red fluorescence, and regardless of sex, they have very hairy skins. One way to feel better is to load the body with molecules of heme — and the simple way to do this is to drink fresh blood.

(continued on page 77)




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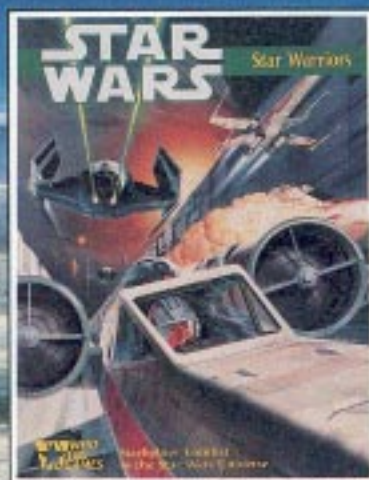
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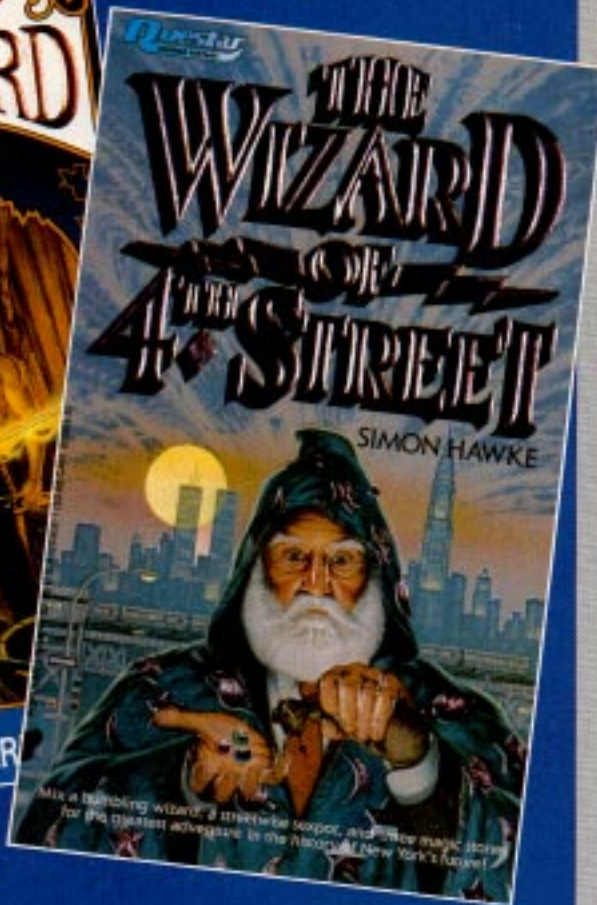
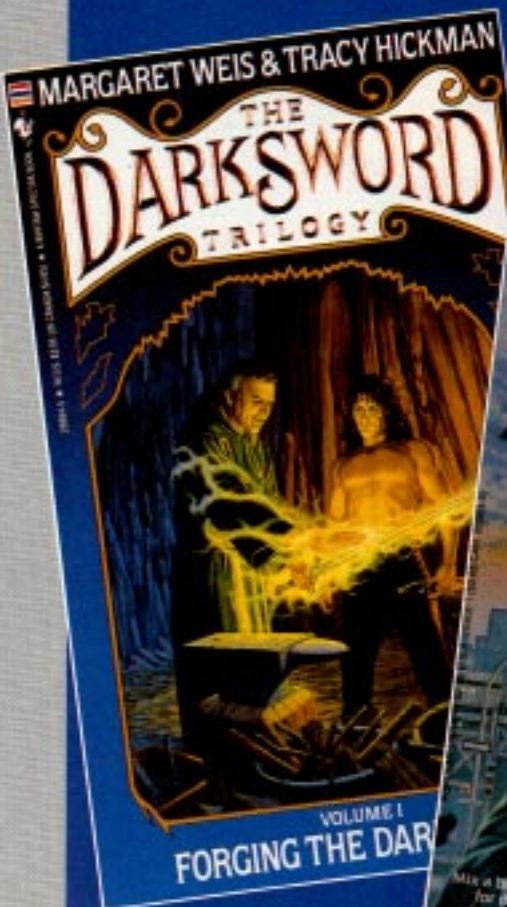
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# The Role of Books



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who must conceal his utter lack of inborn magical ability to avoid execution or exile; and Saryon, whose talent of channeling power does not prevent him from taking a dangerous interest in the forbidden lore of the Ninth Mystery, better known as technology to its students. Both eventually do find themselves exiled, and their destinies intertwine in a remote Technologist village where they figure in the plans of Blachloch, a renegade warlock determined to rule both the outcast scientists and the mages who fear them. Though the two are normally solitary by nature, they must join forces in order to create the Darksword that may be capable of thwarting Blachloch's bid for power.

Weis and Hickman make their protagonists compelling, if not quite appealing characters, drawn with an almost ruthless incision that is fascinating in much the same way as a skillfully performed feat or surgery. Where the DRAGONLANCE® saga books could be described as light adventure (largely on the strength of Tasslehoff Burrfoot's irrepressible good cheer), the Darksword saga is distinctly darker and more probing — just as absorbing, but not necessarily as much fun in the reading.

But characterization is only half of the novels attraction. Its rigorously consistent magical logic is just as striking, taking the concept of a sorcery-based civilization to startling yet plausibly supported conclusions. Elemental magic may not be especially unusual, but when the idea is extended to reshape the basic aspects of Thimhallan's agriculture, it becomes more surprising. Still more exotic is the fact that in this culture, sex has been largely eliminated in favor of a closely managed system of magical artificial insemination, with parents picked by the powerful religious hierarchy. Physical coupling is viewed as a perversion (which may sound outre to many readers), but the authors not only make the premise work, they hang several critical plot points on the implications. The depth of the reasoning is more typical of science fiction than of fantasy, but though the precision of a game design can also be imagined, it's difficult to imagine translating the culture to a campaign along with the magic system.

*The New York Times* has acknowledged Weis and Hickman as a best-selling team in both its Book Review and its Sunday crossword [October 4, 1987]. The Darksword saga seems likely to continue the trend — and perhaps a good deal more, if the future books match this one in scope and substance.

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## FORGING THE DARKSWORD

Margaret Weis & Tracy Hickman  
Bantam Spectra 0-553-26894-5 \$3.95

The cover copy of this first volume in the Darksword trilogy describes the series as "majestic" — and oddly enough, the term is appropriate. Margaret Weis and

Tracy Hickman have adopted a subtly distant, quietly authoritative style and a formal yet diverse magic system for this chronicle, giving it a sense of realism almost as good as the seal of an authentic monarch.

Into their world of subconsciously pervasive order come two wild cards: Joram,

## THE WIZARD OF 4TH STREET

Simon Hawke  
Questar 0-445-20302-1 \$2.95

As another in the growing list of fantasy novels about New York City gone magical, *The Wizard of 4th Street* scores lots of points for ambition and loses most of them for lack of follow-through. The same holds

true of the book's ties to the Arthurian legends. But Simon Hawke's adventure does have attractions for gamers who like to blend spell-casting with larceny rather than with hack-and-slash combat.

It isn't that Hawke's New York lacks local color. It may be the 23rd century, and magic may have replaced technology following a "Collapse" (with a capital C), but all the old landmarks are still there, the atmosphere is properly international, and the cab drivers are the same as ever. None of this flavor, though, has much to do with the story Hawke tells, which might as well be set in any land or time after King Arthur's reign.

Arthur himself doesn't appear in the tale; Hawke seems to have borrowed the mythology mostly for the sake of resurrecting Merlin in a supporting role that has exactly the echo of Sir Alec Guinness in his *Star Wars* incarnation. Morgan Le Fay and Mordred are also on hand, but both are merely namesakes rather than reincarnations — not because Hawke says they are, but because their actions and personalities don't seem to fit the molds cast for them by tradition, or even reasonable extrapolation. Hawke does have the audacity to do away with Merlin at the end of the book, but leaves the way open both for sequels and for a Saturday serial rescue.

Merlin's student, and the book's hero, is a young wizard called Wyrdrune who plans a daring jewel theft in order to finance his magical studies. But another thief has her eyes on the same prize, and the gems in question turn out to be connected to a centuries-old binding spell and a plot to conquer the world. It's a standard idea, given agreeable readability by smooth characterization and Hawke's keen eye for interesting applications of spellcraft. Wyrdrune and Kira are engaging personalities with a plausible mix of cleverness, daring, and wide-eyed disregard for logic, and their presence is what carries the tale. Those who play magic-users or thieves will have a field day — and drive DMs mildly insane — if they can adopt a similar mind set.

Gaming value aside, *The Wizard of 4th Street* is at best worth a marginal recommendation. Fortunately, many libraries nowadays stock current paperbacks, and interested gamers who have access to these enlightened institutions will be able to sidestep the sticky question of whether the book's potential benefits justify casting a \$2.95 vote in favor of average stories over superior ones.

## THE CROWN JEWELS

Walter Jon Williams

**Tor 0-812-55798-0 \$3.50**

First, a quick background lecture: Walter Jon Williams has written several novels (and is in fact one of the founding fathers) in the vein of science fiction known as "cyberpunk." Those novels have absolutely

nothing to do with *The Crown Jewels*, which is clearly not cyberpunk. Actually, according to the flyleaf, this book isn't a novel at all — it's a divertiment, whatever that is. The fact that it looks like a wry, softly satirical novel of theft and countertheft in a complex multispecies atmosphere may be no more than an elaborate illusion.

The plot might have been drawn from a scrambled videotape library full of old Pink Panther movies and reruns of old TV shows like *The Saint* and *It Takes a Thief*. It's a convoluted caper starring Drake Majistral, heir to nearly a dozen noble titles and estates that are all mortgaged to the hilt and range over several worlds. Sustaining his social status and expensive lifestyle requires Drake to take up the profession of honest thievery (no, that's not a contradiction in terms), executing artistically staged cat burglaries and selling the film rights as well as the loot. In this case, the "loot" is a valuable coffer that holds the key to the imperial succession of the Khosali Empire, and there are would-be buyers and spies on all sides.

The story line recalls the classic definition of space opera — the sort of mad chase in which everyone is scrambling for the same target with generally absurd results, and never mind the scientific leaps of logic. But Williams's narrative also recalls opera in another sense. The Khosali, professional though rather benign conquerors with a deep sense of the aristocratic, go about life in a highly stylized, formally polite metaphorical dance that has strong parallels to the rigid yet graceful conventions of "normal" opera. And Williams writes in a gently biting prose style that perfectly matches both the Khosali notions of polite culture and the cheerful deviousness needed to sustain the suspense.

The combination of elements is a difficult one to bring off successfully, and would probably be a major challenge to those who might want to transplant the setting into an SF gaming campaign. But at the same time, the premise seems almost tailor-made for role-playing (not to mention a glorious movie, if it was cast properly). Williams should have called *The Crown Jewels* a novel. It's too well-polished to be a divertiment, even if it is meant mostly in fun.

## TIME PRESSURE

Spider Robinson

**Ace 0-441-80932-4 \$16.95**

If *Time Pressure* was an RPG scenario, there would be almost nothing about it worth a complaint. Even when referees subtly stage-manage their players' choices, the decisions are still in the players' hands. Spider Robinson doesn't quite preserve this illusion of free will; there's little doubt on page 191 what his narrator will decide about the fate of the universe on page 205. By itself, that might not be a fatal flaw in an otherwise agreeable novel — except

that on the evidence of the first 190 pages, Sam's choice seems out of character, and not even Robinson's considerable skill can reshape a character in fourteen pages that took nearly two hundred to establish.

What's even more frustrating is that the setup Robinson presents is fascinating. Into Nova Scotia's wintry wilderness of 1973, where an assortment of hippies and draft dodgers have established a spread-out colony, comes a mysterious and possibly telepathic time traveler on what she claims is a historical research mission. Sam and his writer friend Snaker O'Malley, the only two science-fiction fans in the area, accidentally discover who and what Rachel is when her time capsule arrives slightly off target, and they agree to help her. But Sam has nagging doubts about Rachel's true motives, which eventually turn out to have foundation in reality.

The storytelling is Robinson's usual smooth blend of multilevel puns, sharp modern epigrams, and observant left-handed perceptions of humanity. That's both a blessing and an irritant. The prose makes entertaining reading even as it passes on Robinson's hidden messages, but the voice is sometimes too obviously the author's rather than the narrator's. Like the narrator of Robinson's "Callahan's Bar" stories, Sam describes his thought processes in terms of rapid-fire computer operations, and the two characters also share the burden of blame for the death of a wife and child. There's no danger whatever of getting the two sets of stories confused, but the similarities suggest that Robinson needs to work on character development more carefully.

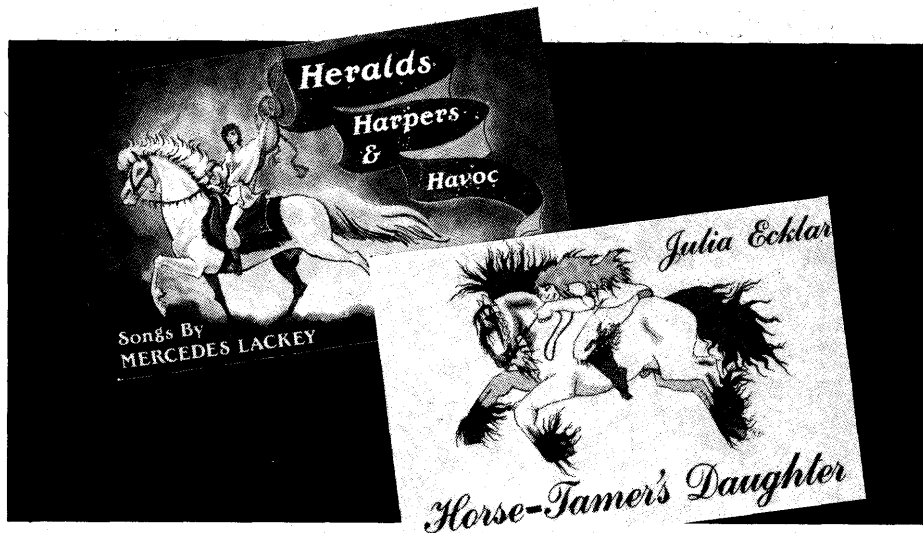
Technically, *Time Pressure* might be labeled a fatally flawed book based on its central character's uneven portrayal. But if that description seems to put Spider Robinson's novel in the same category as, say, *The Wizard of 4th Street*, then it isn't a fair portrayal. Robinson's book may have problems, but it is nonetheless a serious (well, serio-comic) science-fiction story that challenges the mind as much as it entertains. It's also a sideways and logically necessary companion piece to Robinson's earlier *Mindkiller*. And it is very definitely worth reading, flaws and all.

## THE FIRST NAMED

Jonathan Wylie

**Bantam Spectra 0-553-26953-4 \$3.95**

The last year or so has not been kind to the epic quest. With some exceptions, most of the new quest-oriented fantasy published has been tilted sharply either into broad comedy or toward might-thewed heroes with the brain power of overcooked spaghetti. That makes a squarely traditional book like *The First Named* seem almost refreshing by contrast. Jonathan Wylie may not win praise for innovation or deep literary insights, but those looking for a solid and intelligently crafted adventure yarn should



be thoroughly satisfied with this first entry in a trilogy about the royal house of Ark.

Wylie's cast includes all the necessary players: the three princes whose father dies in an unexpected rebellion; the court wizard Ferragamo, who is appealing as more of a sage than an antitank arsenal; the visiting princess caught up in the crisis and romantically linked to more than one of the princes; and, the wickedly subtle sorceress who draws a sort of vampiric sustenance from those she enslaves.

There are also a few neatly executed twists on the usual course of events. Another supporting player is Rehan, who comes to Ark in search of the missing Princess Fontaine only to become an unwilling spy. Fontaine herself is agreeably self-sufficient without being domineering. And Wylie does not subscribe to the unwritten rule that none of the heroes are allowed to die in the first book.

The writing in *The First Named* is neither showy nor elaborate, instead taking a matter-of-fact tone just a degree or two above flatness. This, too, is a refreshing departure from the courtly atmosphere or constant witticism that turn up all too often in current fantasy. It's a mistake, though, to say that the tale is devoid of humor or lacks a sense of royalty when it's needed; Wylie simply lets such things spring from his characters when the time is right rather than using them as window dressing.

One last matter is worth mentioning. Though this novel is only the first of three, it is a complete adventure in itself, with promotional copy in the back suggesting that the next book will pick up the saga a generation later. That's a bonus that Wylie is to be commended for providing, and one that should do nothing but add to what is likely to be a popular new series.

#### SHADOWSPAWN

Andrew J. Offutt  
Ace 0-441-76039-2 \$3.50

To veteran followers of the *Thieves' World* short story collections, the hero of Andrew Offutt's latest novel needs no introduction. He is perhaps the single

cleverest cat burglar in Sanctuary, master of the arts of silence and deception, and a dangerous man to cross in a tight place because of the throwing knives he carries in his boots.

Now, though, he has left Sanctuary with his would-be lover Mignureal in an effort both to escape that city's chaotic dangers and to try to start a new and somewhat more respectable life. Intrigue and darkness, however, refuse to stay away for long, and between desert raiders, unobtrusive sorcerers, and 11 cursed silver coins, Shadowspawn is soon forced to make use of his thieving talents in an effort to unravel the puzzle.

Offutt's tale is basically free-standing so that those who haven't followed *Thieves' World* can still understand who's who and what's going on, though series fans will catch several quick asides and observations that outsiders will miss. The prose is crisp and efficient, and Offutt does a good job of managing his characters and plot, though the coin curse is occasionally somewhat erratic and there is not enough foreshadowing to make the adventure a whodunit.

Yet besides being a credible guidebook for aspiring master thieves, Offutt's yarn is noteworthy for featuring not one but two lively felines that manage to assert their personalities quite well — without being telepathic. The device of the talking cat is one of the most easily mishandled gimmicks there is, and Offutt deserves congratulations for resisting the temptation to give the cats speaking parts. (Actually, "resisting temptation" may not be an appropriate phrase. It's necessary for the plot that neither cat be able to speak — which is all that can be said without spoiling a major twist.)

*Shadowspawn* is another one of those books that's less ambitious than it is swashbuckling, though the swordplay and sorcery are neatly balanced with scenes of horse-trading (literally) and routine city life. It really isn't necessary to play a thief character in order to get an evening's advice and enjoyment out of Offutt's novel. There's material in plenty for almost any

gamer, assuming that he or she doesn't get caught up in the story and forget to pay attention to making notes.

And now, as they say in Monty Python, for something completely different. . .

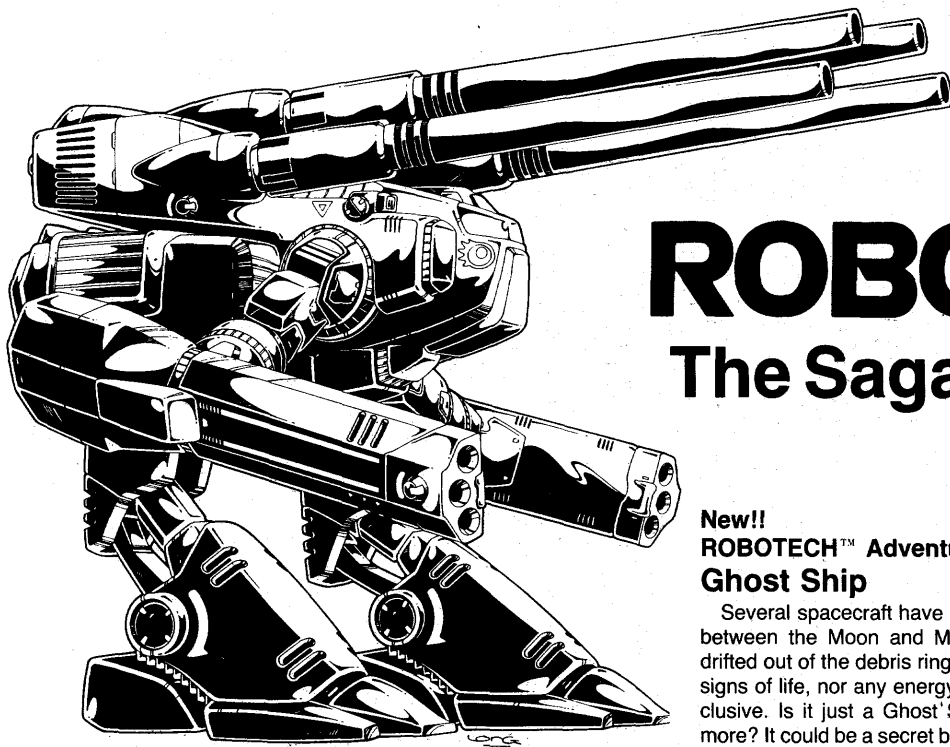
#### A musical interlude

Bards — and music and poetry in general — can be a real problem for *Dungeon Masters*. The wandering minstrel, the obscure prophecy, and the threat of writing a character into a scathing ballad are all very much a part of medieval fantasy, but the average DM is not likely to be either a skilled folk musician or a poet with the necessary background in rhyme and meter to make prophecies come out sounding authentic. Indeed, folk music and poetry that rhymes are becoming almost impossible to find these days, because no one writes or sings such things anymore. Or do they?

Indeed they do, and bless them, they even put the songs on tape. The technical term for this is "filk" music, which can be loosely translated to mean the folk music of science fiction and fantasy. In turn, what this means is that the singer writes a song about his or her favorite characters from *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, or a favorite Barbara Hambly novel (either creating music or grafting the words onto a familiar tune), and proceeds to regale friends with the composition either around the nearest fireplace or at the nearest SF convention. Even AD&D® games don't escape; there is a venerable set of lyrics called "You Bash the Balrog," sung to the tune of "Waltzing Matilda," concerning an ill-fated adventuring party that runs afoul of a goblin, a potion, and the title villain all in the space of a morning.

Filking has been going on long enough now that it has developed its own closet recording industry — and the leading filk, publisher has recently outgrown its closet. Off Centaur Publications sells an amazing range of tapes, song books, and musical miscellany that should be of immense value to anyone even remotely interested in adding a musical atmosphere to an RPG campaign. For example:

*Heralds, Harpers, & Havoc* (60-minute cassette, \$9) features songs written by Mercedes Lackey to supplement her Arrows trilogy about the Heralds who patrol the kingdom of Valdemar. There are a number of different vocalists represented on the tape, and songs to suit a variety of purposes. "Philosophy" falls into the category of character ballads as an engaging memorial to mischief, though the last verse won't make sense to someone who hasn't read the books. "Dark and Stormy Night" offers the outlines of a murder mystery, if one with comic overtones. There are also several romantic tunes, and "Threes" concerns Lackey's mercenary characters Tarma and Kethry, familiar from stories in the *Sword & Sorceress* anthologies and a novel to be published this spring.



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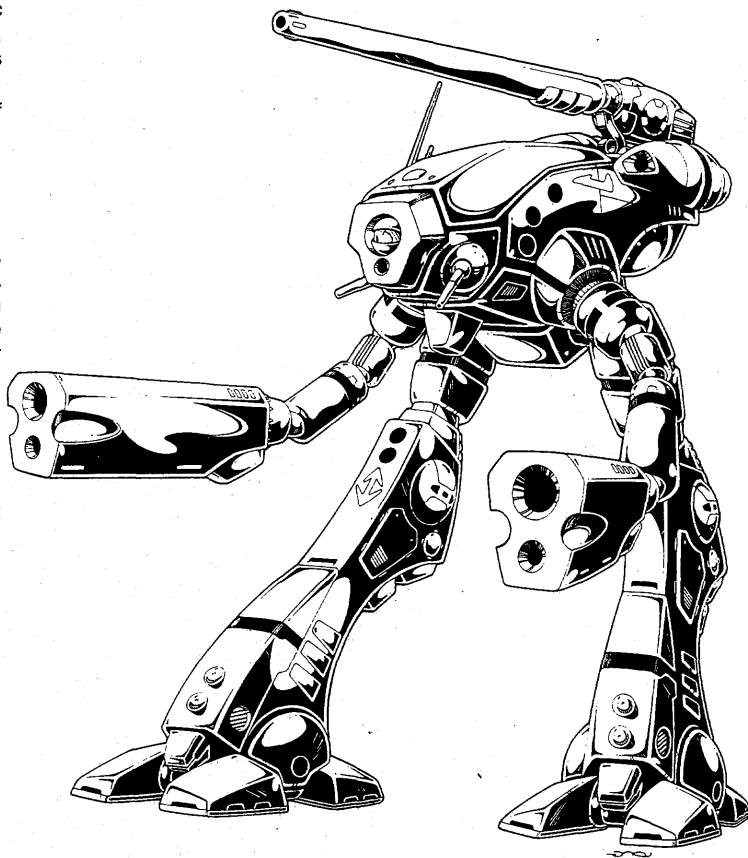
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The story behind "Threes," itself a memorable adventure ballad, is available on *Turnabout* (60-minute cassette, \$7.50). This is a spoken-word tape of a short story published several years back in a small fantasy magazine, and it's educational to compare the more detailed literary version with the later song. The tale itself is a cleverly constructed scenario with possibilities for adaptation. Mary Mason's reading of Lackey's story is strong on vocal skills but occasionally strays into overinterpretation. This recording is one of Off Centaur's earlier products, which sometimes shows in less polished engineering, but is still a fascinating and worthwhile curiosity.

*Horse-Tamer's Daughter* (60-minute cassette, \$9) draws songs from a variety of authors focusing on female heroines. Worlds visited include Marion Zimmer Bradley's *Darkover*, Andre Norton's *Witch World*, and the science fiction of C.J. Cherryh. Julia Ecklar is the performer, and nearly all the music has enough of a bardic character to fit comfortably into a game setting, either as authentic background or lures into adapted adventures of one kind or another.

The range of filk material available is unusually broad, with both science fiction and fantasy well-covered and traditional music represented as well. The quality of the recordings, writers, and performers is

genuinely professional. The major differences between Off Centaur productions and "real world" music are in the lyrics — and at least in some circles, the filksongs would win that comparison without even trying.

A complete catalog of Off Centaur offerings is available by writing Off Centaur Publications at P.O. Box 424, El Cerrito CA 94530. The company also sells tapes at various science-fiction conventions around the country and makes its merchandise available to local retailers, but most of its business is done by mail order.

### Recurring roles

Frontier Alaska is perhaps an unlikely setting for fantasy gaming, but Elizabeth Scarborough's new novel should provide DMs with any number of ideas for making use of vampires and were creatures in settings other than Transylvania. *The Goldcamp Vampire* (Bantam Spectra, \$3.50), a sequel to *The Drastic Dragon of Draco, Texas*, is a delightfully warped twist on the Dracula legend which has its vampire lore down cold and its characters bewildered in high style.

Barbara Hambly, meanwhile, turns her attention to ancient Rome as *Search the Seven Hills* (Ballantine, \$3.95) chronicles a complicated kidnapping plot that wanders in and out of the struggles between the Romans and early Christian sects. Strictly

speaking, there are no fantasy elements here, but the portrayal of city life and the devious plotting both recommend themselves to scenario designers.

After a series of winners, Pocket Books' line of *Star Trek* novels dips a bit with *Bloodthirst* (Pocket, \$3.95) — though not as far as the cover copy makes it seem. Despite a lot of subtext and innuendo to the contrary, J.M. Dillard *hasn't* written a vampire story, but she doesn't seem to know who her main character is, which badly confuses an already complex scheme involving illegal research and Starfleet corruption. Nor is David Gerrold's novelization of *Encounter at Farpoint*, the premiere of the brand-new Trek series, especially satisfying, as it does little beyond transcribing the screenplay. Both Gerrold and movie novelizer Vonda McIntyre have done better work.

*Fever Season* (DAW, \$3.50) continues the shared-world series set in C.J. Cherryh's city of Merovingen with results largely similar to those of the previous volume. The flavor this time is that of an episodic novel, which speaks well for the editing, but the story quality is a touch uneven. Once again, Mercedes Lackey and Leslie Fish provide the best and most satisfying stories — to the extent that Fish's character, the musician and undercover environmentalist Rif, seems like a prime candidate for a novel all to herself. Ω

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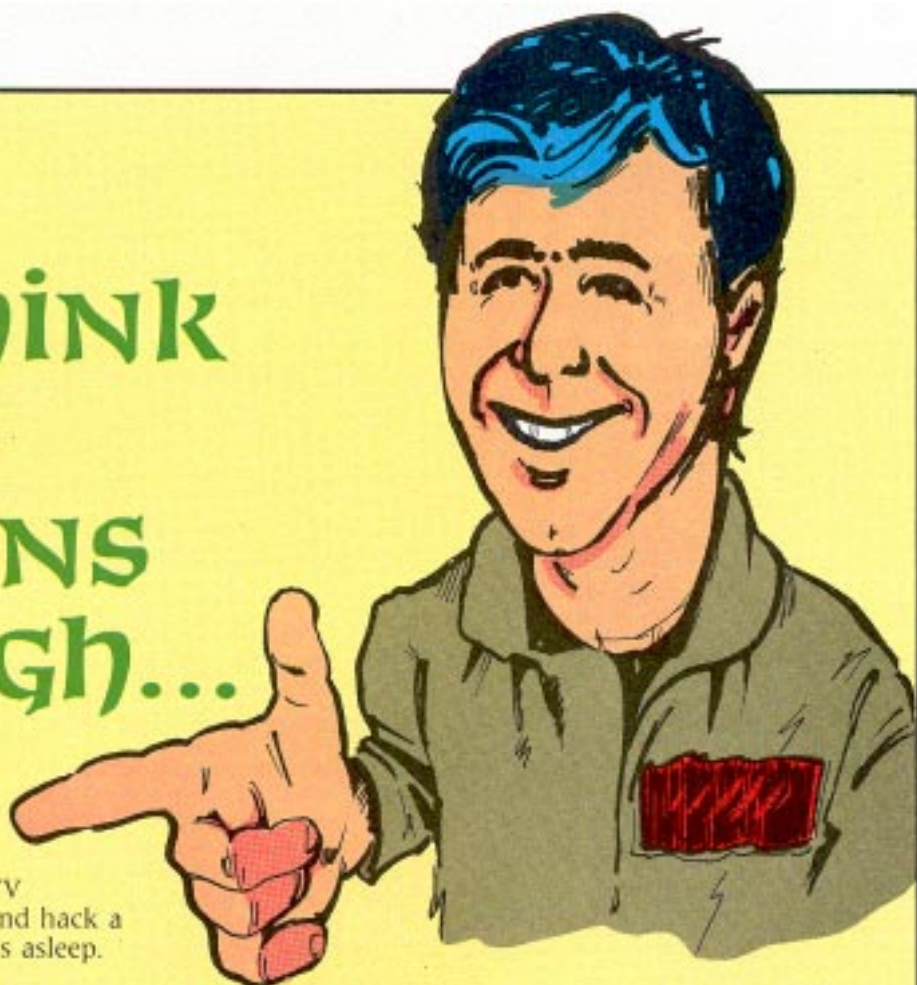
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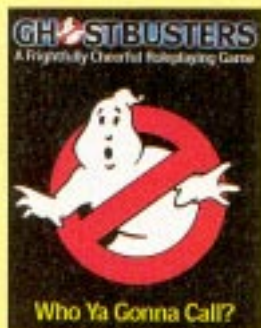
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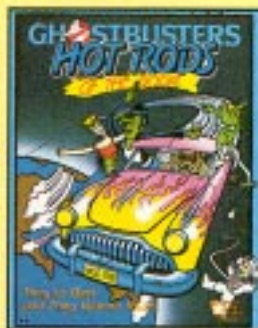
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# Illusory Solutions

## *Illusions, illusionists, and an illusions table*

by Matt Battison

For the past several years, I have encountered a number of situations in AD&D® game campaigns where problems and disputes arise concerning the use of illusions in the campaign. If a PC encounters an illusion, must the player voice the character's disbelief before a saving throw is possible, or is the save always applicable for the character, whether the player suspects an illusion or not? I've been told by a DM that the former is the case, but I then found myself wondering what would happen if there were an illusionist in the party? Would our opponents gain our DM's omniscient view and deduce that there was an illusionist present, thereby earning their saving throws every time? That would give NPCs an unfair advantage over PCs. When I brought this up, my DM agreed. Consequently, the ruling was changed in our campaign, and from that point on, saving throws against illusions were like saving throws against everything else. That worked well until the day arrived that there was an illusionist in the party. At that point, all hell broke loose. The bottom line is that illusions in the AD&D game aren't sufficiently regulated.

Let's take an example: An 8th-level illusionist faces an 8th-level fighter. He wins initiative easily and casts a spectral force spell. He chooses to create the illusion of a large, ancient red dragon interposed between the fighter and the illusionist. Such a beast might well fit into the spell's 1200-square-foot area of effect; presumably, such a dragon would occupy about a 50' x 20' area. Assuming that the fighter automatically qualifies for a saving throw (after all, this dragon just popped in out of nowhere), he still needs a 13 or better to save. If he fails, he is treated to quite a show — the claws, the bite, even the breath weapon of that dragon, so long as the illusionist concentrates on the illusion. Even if the illusionist doesn't concentrate,

the illusion continues for three more rounds. Is this being unfair to the fighter?

Not as much as it's being unfair to the cornerstone of the AD&D game, the magic-user. To compete with the illusionist in the scenario above, a magic-user needs to cast a *monster summoning VII* spell — something he cannot do until he reaches 18th level! Even then, there is no guarantee that his monster will be a dragon, let alone a red one. And even if it is, there is no provision for selecting its size; likewise, its age is predetermined: a summoned red dragon will always be very old in this case (as it will do more damage). Furthermore, while the magic-user's spell duration is ample (at least 26 rounds), the illusionist can operate his illusion for as long as he concentrates, plus three rounds. The casting times reveal another handicap for the magic-user: *monster summoning VII* requires nine segments to cast, while *spectral force* requires only three.

What's to be done when a DM has an 8th-level illusionist PC who is outdoing his 18th-level magic-user NPC? Is the DM to be shot at sunrise for such mismanagement? Not necessarily; a mere loss of initiative and a failed save could still leave an 18th-level magic-user with big problems if he faced an illusionist of even half his level! After all, why stop at a red dragon? The illusionist might just as easily concoct a titan, a demon — yes, how about Demogorgon himself? What's to limit the clever illusionist? Okay, his victims get their saving throws, but these alone won't create equity between magic-users and illusionists. There has to be something else.

The DM could make a bunch of sticky rules, like saying that if the illusionist creates Demogorgon illusions, he might end up getting Demogorgon angry. Instead of creating 101 little rules, however, the DM should use one basic framework to regulate the illusionist; consequently, we have the Illusions Table that goes with this article. This table applies to any use of *phantasmal force*, *improved phantasmal*

*force*, *spectral force*, and any other illusory conditions the DM deems applicable.

Some of the conditions listed in the table are designed to prevent the creation of illusions of creatures that are much more powerful than the illusion-caster. These conditions are intended to encourage the illusionist to use moderation (for example, conditions 5 and 6 in the table). Why should an illusionist create an illusion of Demogorgon when an illusion of a gorgon is easier? Furthermore, if an illusion of a gnoll will suffice, why use anything else? (In the last instance, the illusion of the gnoll is easily cast, thus making it more believable.)

In the table, references to damage dice are for those occasions where an illusionist creates the illusion of a damage-inflicting spell. Up to this point, there have been no concrete guidelines for the regulation of spell-imitating illusions. In the past, the illusionist was free to simulate the effects of a fireball created by a 30-HD *fireball* spell. If the victim failed to save, he took 30-180 hp damage. Applying the rules given in this article, an 8th-level illusionist simulating a 30-HD *fireball* would allow his victims a saving-throw bonus of  $(30 - 8) \times 2$ , or +44 to their saving throws! In this case, the illusionist has clearly overstepped his abilities. A safer bet would be to simulate a *fireball* cast by a magic-user of the illusionist's same level (i.e., an 8-HD *fireball*). Better still, if the illusionist could get by with the illusion of a 3-HD *fireball*, his victims would instead receive a -1 to their saving throws. Still and all, if the illusionist faces a life-or-death situation and has to shoot for high-damage illusions, he would still be allowed the opportunity, but at a greater risk of miscasting the spell entirely. Thus, our 8th-level illusionist might gamble on a 10-HD *fireball* illusion, but the trade-off would be a +4 saving-throw bonus for his opponents.

Condition 9 is one of the more important rules listed in the table. It would be very difficult for the average illusionist to simulate a dragon; the glistening fangs, thrashing limbs and wings, glaring eyes, hisses, flapping noises, thundering roars, and earthshaking lunges would be difficult to mimic. Add to this the complexity of a breath weapon — the heat, light, and roar of a funnel of flame, for example — and the illusionist's workload suddenly increases. Condition 9 makes illusions of spells or spell-like powers emanating from an illusory source a second test of the illusion's believability. This is only fair. Consider an illusionist depicting a medusa or a catoblepas: If the gaze powers of these creatures go unchecked, a 6th-level illusionist could slay opponents as easily as could a 12th- to 14th-level magic-user.

Conditions 10 and 11 do not guarantee saving-throw bonuses for *phantasmal force* or *improved phantasmal force*. The particular illusion determines that. If a 10'-deep pit trap is created by *phantasmal force*, no bonus is given to the target of

Illusions Table: Saving-Throw Modifiers

Illusion-casting condition	Saving-throw modifier
1. Subject is a dwarf, gnome, or halfling	Racial modifier on saving-throws vs. spells applies
2. Subject has above- or below-average wisdom	Magical attack adjustment applies
3. Subject is using a <i>helm of telepathy</i> or telepathic powers	+3
4. Subject is surprised; illusion takes effect before surprise ends	-2 (-1 if illusion takes effect on last surprise segment)
5. Illusory creature's HD greater than illusionist's level	+ ((HD - level) x 2)
6. Illusory creature's HD less than illusionist's level	+ ((1/2 level - HD) x -1)
7. Illusionist has never seen creature on which his illusion is based	+2
8. Creature simulated is one-of-a-kind (a deity, demi-god, specific PC or NPC, etc.)	+3
9. Illusion attempts spell-casting or spell-like attack	Roll saving throw vs. spells against illusion itself, <i>not</i> against the simulated attack
10. Spell lacks obvious sensory elements (as per <i>phantasmal force</i> )	+4
11. Spell lacks substantial sensory elements (as per <i>improved phantasmal force</i> )	+2
12. Target is aware of illusionist's profession or of illusion's powers	+2
13. Target has been attacked previously by the illusionist with the same spell <sup>1</sup>	+1 per previous spell attack
14. Target is an illusionist or illusion-casting creature <sup>2</sup>	+1
15. Illusionist is simulating a magic-user's spell against a magic-user	+2
16. Subject's intelligence is less than 7	- 1
17. Subject's intelligence is greater than 18	See <i>Legends &amp; Lore</i> , page 7

<sup>1</sup> Treat *phantasmal force*, *improved phantasmal force*, and *spectral force* as the same spell.  
<sup>2</sup> This excludes magic-users.

the illusion. A *phantasmal force* lacks sound and temperature, but a pit trap lacks any distinguishing audible or temperature-oriented stimuli. A *phantasmal force* illusion of a dragon, however, puts the spells limitations to the test. It is likely that the dragon will seem oddly quiet. Furthermore, where are the heat and the odor of its breath? Characters subjected to such an illusion gain a +4 bonus to their saving throws. If, however, *improved phantasmal force* is used to make the dragon, the lack of obvious sensory elements in the previous example becomes a lack of only substantial elements. The dragon could now roar mightily, but it would still be an odorless, room-temperature dragon. Consequently, a character subjected to the limitations of this illusion would receive a saving throw bonus of +2. Of course, if an illusion only involves sight and sound, sight and odor, or some other sensory combination, *phantasmal force* would lack only substantial sensory elements, and the subject would only qualify for a +2 saving-throw bonus.

Condition 12 is another important case. Let's assume that a character belongs to a party containing an illusionist, and that he is aware of the illusionist's profession. The illusionist will have a tougher time making the character believe his illusions than he

would if the character were unaware of his true nature.

Condition 13 works in a similar vein. After being hit a few times by the same spell from the same illusionist, a character might begin to notice the illusion's subtle flaws. Condition 14 goes along with condition 13. If the target uses illusions himself, he is much likelier to notice what's really going on. Condition 15 deals with similar circumstances. For example, if an illusionist simulates a *fireball* spell, wouldn't an opposing magic-user be likely to see the tiny flaws in the illusion? After all, who knows *fireballs* better than a magic-user?

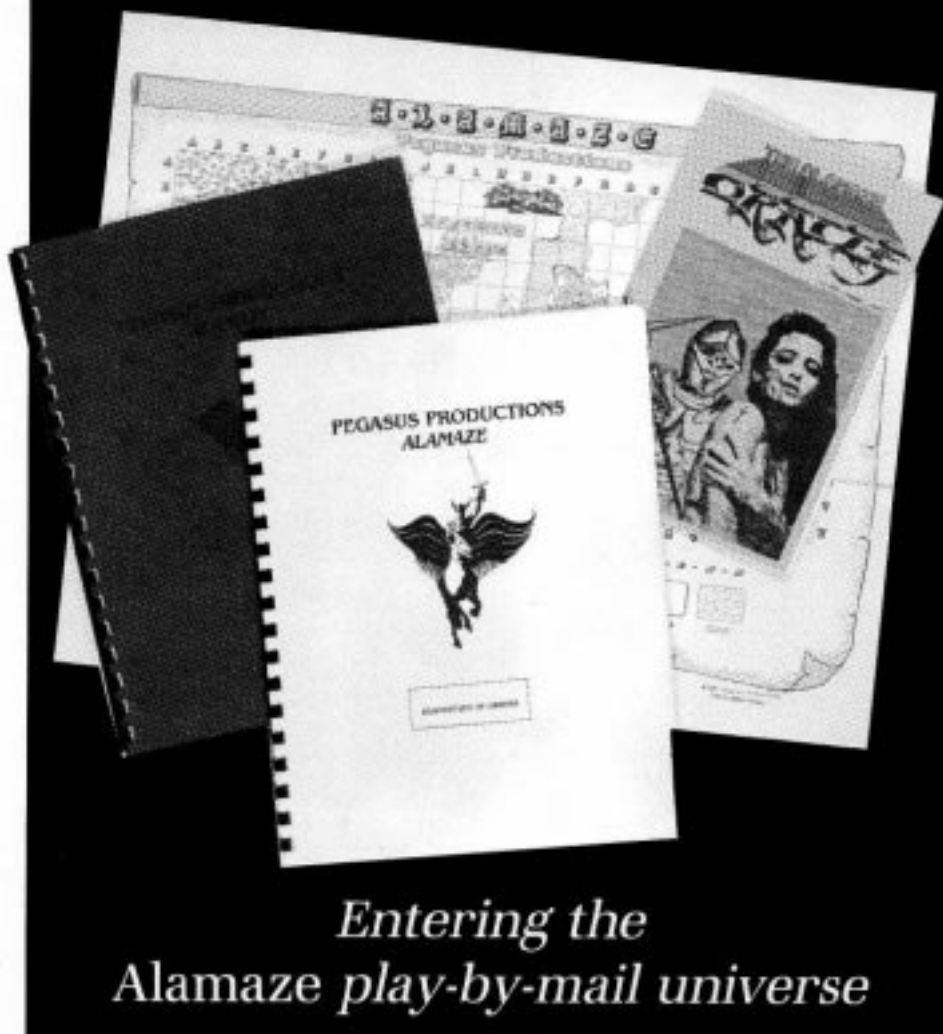
It may seem that the stipulations are too numerous and that too many are beneficial to the target of the illusion. Nonetheless, it must be stressed that a great deal of control on illusionist's spells is necessary to prevent imbalance and abuse of the game's loose parameters on the topic.

Let's return to the example of the 8th-level illusionist facing an 8th-level fighter. Neither character has been surprised, and the illusionist has won initiative. He still wants to create a large, ancient red dragon. No previous spell of this sort was used by the illusionist on the fighter. The fighter is human, has normal wisdom, and does not possess a *helm of telepathy* or any sort of telepathic powers. The illusion-

ist has seen such a large, ancient red dragon before, and there is more than one red dragon in the world. This eliminates a lot of modifiers right away. A large, ancient red dragon is an 11-HD creature, so the fighter gains a saving-throw bonus of (11 - 8) x 2 for a bonus of +6. For now, the illusionist will not bother simulating the breath weapons or spell-casting abilities of the dragon. As a result, the fighter will be making only one save for now. As stated earlier, the spell used by the illusionist is a *spectral force*, so all the sensory elements are there. The fighter is unaware that his opponent is an illusionist, the fighter does not normally use illusions, and his intelligence is normal. His modified saving throw is now a 7 or better.

While players with illusionists might argue that the table makes their spell-casting a lot more tedious, it should be pointed out that one cure for all that calculating is for the illusionist to use a few illusions in a majority of situations, and to note the modifiers for these illusions on his character sheet. The information will then be easily accessed when the time comes to cast the illusion spells. The results are fewer headaches for the DM and fewer dirty looks from the players.

# Fantasy First Class



©1988 by Michael Gray

*Alamaze* is a computer-moderated, fantasy play-by-mail game from Pegasus Productions — and it is a treat. You play this game with other players around the country, by mail and by phone. It takes more than a year to complete, and it will be a very interesting year — you'll meet new people, role-play a king and run a kingdom, and have lots of fun.

*Alamaze* is full of monsters and wizards, spies and spells, warlords and diplomats. Fifteen players control different "races,"

each with different strengths and weaknesses. All the races (or kingdoms) start the game spread out across the 26 x 26 square grid that forms your world.

On each turn, you get a readout of what is going on and what your people and armies are doing. You have only so many orders that you can issue each turn, so the problem is to decide which orders to write. You'll probably want to issue twice as many orders as you are allowed, but you have an order limitation based on a character trait known as Influence (for example, if your king's Influence level is 12, you can issue 12 orders). Additionally, most orders have a cost; diplomats and agents have to be paid, and soldiers must

be paid and fed.

Since your readout only tells you what you know — about the places you own and where your spies and armies have gone — you don't know everything. Fourteen other players are trying to win the game, so you're wise to make some friends and allies soon, or you'll find your kingdom is the target of someone else's plans.

There are three ways to win the game: by controlling six out of 10 regions on the map; by achieving your kingdom's special victory conditions; or, by having the greatest number of status points on turn 40. Special victory conditions are based on the nature of each kingdom. For example, the dwarves need to produce gold, the elves need to control the forest cities, the magic-users need magical artifacts, etc. Status points are awarded for the number of allies you have and for the number of regions you control.

After you sign up for this game, you get your setup information and two spiral-bound booklets: a rulebook and a manual of orders. The rulebook gives just enough information for you to play the game. For example, you only learn a little bit about each kingdom, but you don't know where the towns and villages are, and you have no idea where any artifacts are hidden.

The order manual is nicely done. Each order (like #150: Attack a Population Center) has a number that indicates the sequence in which that order is processed by the computer. There is nothing more maddening than to wonder *what* happens *when* in a PBM game; here, the sequence of orders is much clearer than in most such games I've played. The general orders are in the manual, but there are other orders that are not. Magic spells, for example, have order numbers, but you only find out about these orders when you gain the ability to cast new spells.

As mentioned before, the number of orders you can issue equals your Influence level, which starts at 12 to 15. There are several ways to raise or lower a player's Influence, as the game will reveal. Your starting Influence is given on your setup sheet.

For each turn, which takes about two weeks, you must send in your order to the Gamemaster at Pegasus Productions. Your orders are then processed with those of all other players, and you'll soon be sent a multipage readout of what took place. With each readout, you get a blank turn-sheet and a preaddressed envelope.

The grid-map of *Alamaze* contains several different types of terrain, cities, seas, and rough regional locations. The regional names are overprinted across the grid. There are no printed regional boundaries, as these may change from game to game. Terrain includes plains, forests, mountains, seas, marshes, deserts, and cities, all of which affect movement and combat. Towns and villages are not shown on the map; their locations change from game to game. You have to explore with groups, agents, and magic to find things.

There are 18 possible kingdoms, 15 of which are used per game. The kingdoms are: Giants, Paladins, Gnomes, Elves, Darkelves, Rangers, Uriks, Westmen, Halflings, Dragons, Nomads, Dwarves, Barbarians, Swampmen, the Sorcerer, the Witchlord, the Warlock, and the Underworld. Each kingdom is different. Dragons can fly, the halflings can trade food for gold, the paladins have very strong troops, the Underworld has lots of agents, etc. Each kingdom starts with a given number of population centers that are either clustered together or scattered about the land.

Each kingdom also starts with differing numbers of troops, agents, emissaries, leaders, and wizards. All but the troops can progress upward to higher levels during the game. However, your kingdom has only a fixed number of wizards, and there is a limit on the maximum level these wizards can achieve.

Military groups are made up of troops (archers, cavalry, infantry), leaders, and wizards. You can have only four such groups, which can move around, fight other groups, and attack population centers. Movement rates also vary by kingdom. All groups can use 20 movement points per turn, but the number of points it takes to enter each terrain type varies. For example, dwarves can move easily through the mountains, but the Witchlord uses up 12 of his 20 points to enter a mountain square. Dragons can fly over anything! The military groups have to be fed and paid, so the more troops you have, the more it costs you to maintain them. Maintenance costs vary by kingdom.

There are three types of population centers: cities, towns and villages. Cities produce 15,000 + gold units each turn but have a negative food production. Towns produce about 8,000 gold and 3,000 food units; villages produce about 3,000 gold and 8,000 food. It takes a good mix of population centers to feed and pay your military groups, and still have plenty of gold left to pay for your orders. Production can be increased by issuing the appropriate orders and paying for the increase. Production can also be sabotaged by enemy agents.

Each turn in the game represents a month in the year. During three months of each year, gold production is halved and food production is quartered. Almost everything you do in this game has a gold cost. For example, it costs 6,000 gold to use your prince emissary (see next paragraph) in any way, and 8,000 to 10,000 gold are needed to raise a wizard up to the next power level.

Emissaries come in many ranks: princes, dukes, counts, barons, governors, ambassadors, and envoys. The higher the rank, the more effective the emissary is at diplomatic efforts. Emissaries can be ordered to attempt to start a rebellion in an enemy town, to usurp control, or to maintain the status quo. The strategic power of emissaries is easily underestimated by new

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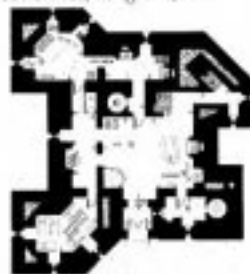
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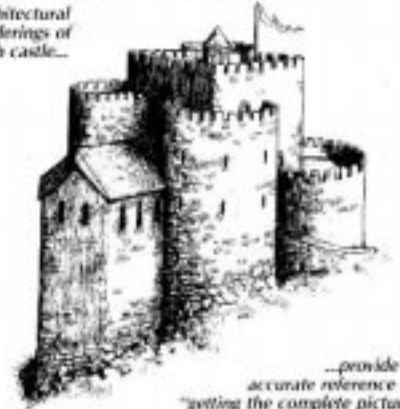
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Agents and fanatics are your spies and assassins. They can train to increase levels, or they can increase levels by successfully completing their missions, including stealing gold or food, sabotage, kidnapping, assassination, bribing, trailing groups, or exploring a square.

Magic is reserved for wizards. Each kingdom starts with up to five wizards. Military kingdoms may start with two low-level wizards who can only get to power 3 ("power" is used for "level") during the game, whereas the Witchlord starts with four low-level wizards and a wizard of power 4, with a limit of power 8! The spell lists vary only slightly by kingdom. When a wizard goes up a level, he gets a list of new spells he can cast. Low-level spells include Create Food, Fear, Magic Research, and Raven Familiar. High-level spells include Kill Leader, Create Gold, Wall of Flame, Invisibility, Teleportation, and Earthquake.

Military groups are led by leaders (captains, generals, marshals, and warlords) who are promoted as they fight battles. Leaders confer a percentage increase to the troops' strength during battle. Kingdom-named troops, such as the Gnome troops of the Gnomes' player, are stronger than new recruits (which are levied in towns and cities). Recruits can be trained up to veteran level. Other types of troops can be magically summoned and added to your groups; monsters, skeletons, and ghouls are available. The best part about summoned troops is that they don't have to be paid!

If all this isn't enough, you can trade gold and food with other players, search for artifacts, or struggle for a seat on the five-member High Council. The High Council votes to commend its members and friends, and to condemn its enemies. Being on the High Council increases your Influence by 1. It's nasty when your enemies control the council!

Each king has three secrets, called Skeletons, listed on his setup sheet. These secrets are embarrassing facts that lower his Influence if revealed by another player, and they can be discovered by bribing a player's emissaries. When a skeleton is revealed, a player loses Influence and gets thrown off the High Council (if he is on it).

*Alamaze* is a very diplomatic game. I've communicated with other *Alamaze* players more than in any other PBM game I've played over the past 11 years; be prepared

for a huge phone bill. If you don't try to "diplome," you may not last long.

As a game designer myself, I'd have to say that this is one of the finest designs I've seen. Its roots are in *Earthwood*, a fine fantasy game by GSI, but it is much more complex and sophisticated. Though I've had some problems with the processing of my orders, the wrinkles are being ironed out on an ongoing basis. The designer, Rick McDowell, is a very conscientious game master, quick to fix errors and always ready to improve his game. He doesn't leak secret information, even to reviewers like me.

Several areas still need cleaning up. The spell lists need some work, for example. Of two spells I received at level 5, one does 900 points of damage to the enemy per level of the spell-caster (Command Tornado), and the other does 1,100 points of damage per level (Earthquake). I'll never cast a Command Tornado. It would have been better to give me the Tornado at level 4. Perhaps this was an attempt to vary the spell lists from kingdom to kingdom.

I have two other pet peeves, but one of them has been fixed. There was once no way to protect a wizard from an assassination attempt. If you lost a wizard, you never got another to replace him! This problem was recently patched up — a good example of how effective the game master is in keeping the game enjoyable. My other peeve is that an enemy player can hit and run before you can catch him. For example, an enemy group can show up at one of my towns on one turn, then attack the town on the next turn, capture it, and move away before I can catch it. I can use an agent to find out where the group went, but unless I am lucky, it can always stay one jump ahead of me. There is a magic spell that prevents a group from retreating, but you have to be in the same square as the enemy to use it. Maybe there's a higher-level spell that takes care of this problem (I haven't seen the higher-level (6-8) spell lists yet).

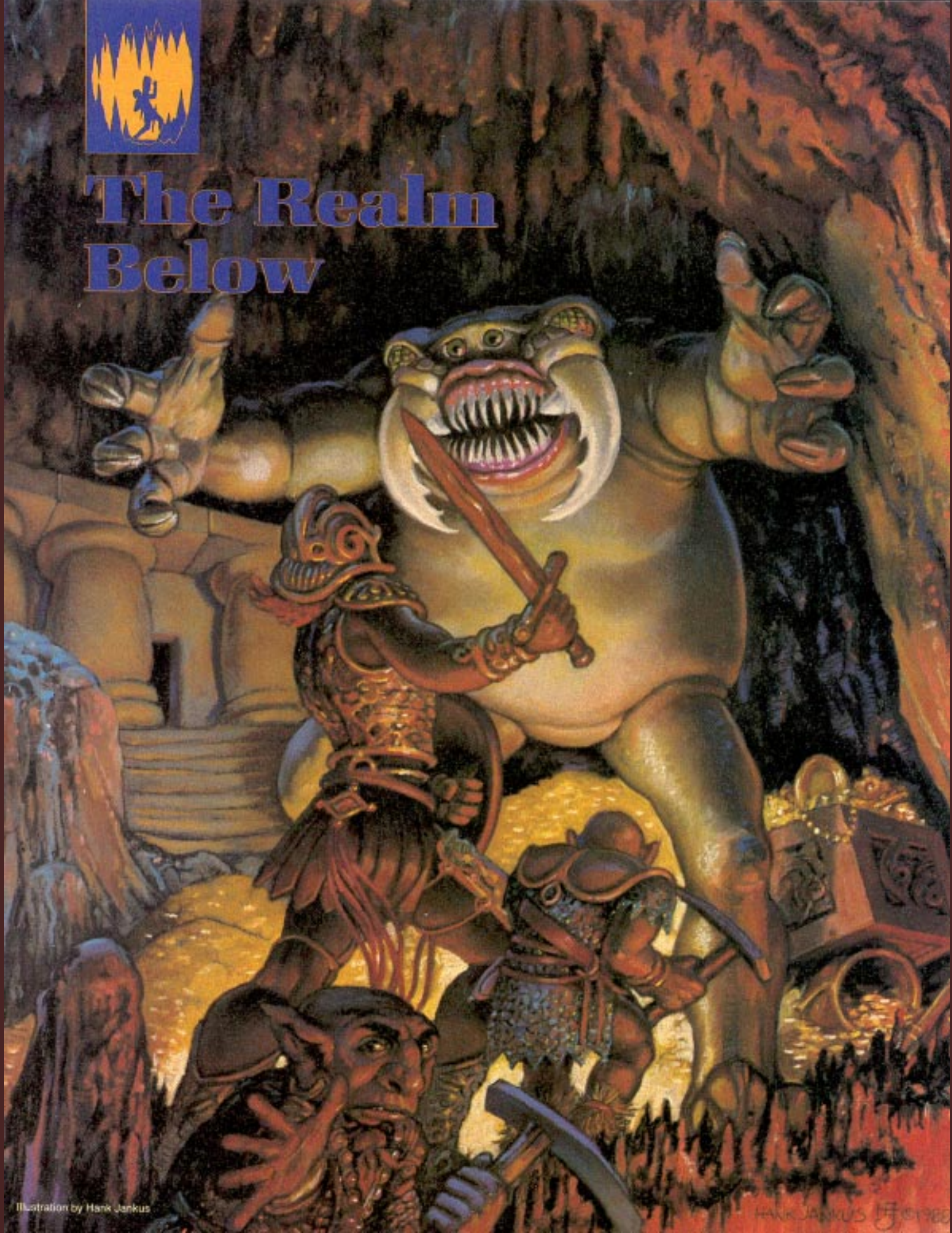
I like this game, and I recommend it to experienced players. At \$6.00 per turn, it is expensive to play, and it is quite complex. Novices can do quite well if they ally with and learn from veteran players. Players should consider spending lots of time on the phone. Two or three players can find out much of what is going on through coordination of their orders.

If this sounds like the game for you, good luck! I'll be waiting for you in *Alamaze!*

*Alamaze* is offered by Pegasus Productions, P.O. Box 70636, Ft. Lauderdale FL 33307. The setup package is \$15 and includes two rulebooks, a map, your setup, and your first two turns.



# The Realm Below





# To the Center of the Oerth

## The fast lane through subterranean tunnel design

by Vic Broquard

Having completed their exploration of your *Dungeoneer's Survival Guide* Underdark cavern, your adventurers now head down a 10-mile-long tunnel in search of the next great cavern. You quickly estimate the time needed to get through the tunnel and announce, "After spending eight hours marching through the long tunnel, you arrive . . ." To which the players cry, "What do we find in the tunnel?" — and you discover you have no idea. Well, don't despair; the following tunnel design tables can take care of all complaints in your underground campaign.

The gigantic Underdark caverns are not just a few feet apart, so characters actually spend considerable time moving through the connecting tunnels. Because of this, and because well-developed tunnels add greatly to the overall mood of an underground adventure, it is important to design the tunnels well. This is especially true for beginning Underdark explorers, who are probably unsure of what equipment to bring along, what safeguards are needed, or even what to expect in such a setting. In fact, in my campaign, the players had nearly as much fun making their way down the tunnels as they did in handling the great cavern complexes!

The following tables can be used to prepare interesting and challenging tunnels in any campaign. They incorporate rules from both the *Dungeoneer's Survival Guide* and *Wilderness Survival Guide*. Tunnels are grouped into two categories: waterways and dry tunnels. The dry tunnels are traveled on foot, while waterways can only be traveled by some form of boat.

The dry-tunnel case is examined first, since dry tunnels are more commonly used in Underdark campaigns.

### Dry tunnels

It is assumed that the Dungeon Master has already drawn in the major tunnels connecting the large underground caverns of his Underdark realm. To flesh out any given dry tunnel, one merely needs to consider that it is composed of one or more sections — each with its own set of characteristics.

There are several ways of using these tables. One way is to generate each section of the tunnel; another way is to use the tables for ideas, and just place cavern features where desired. (Both methods have been used in my campaigns.)

For the basic section design, one begins with Table 1A, which provides the length of the tunnel section. Next, the section height and width are found on Table 1B. Tables 1C and 1D define the section's slope and direction, and Tables 1E and 1F provide the options for the floor surface. The slopes correspond to the climbing tables in both the *DSG* and *WSG*. Tables 1G and 1H define local air quality and illumination.

Table 2A is then checked to determine what, if any, special features occur within that section. Many of these will provide numerous challenges for characters and players alike — especially for inexperienced underground adventurers. The Geothermal Activity table (Table 2B) and the Section Blockages table (Table 2C) add variety. But the Habitation Signs table (Table 2D) can be extremely valuable in providing subtle clues about the next major cavern coming up — dead bodies, ruined outposts, broken weapons, battlefields, cairns marking territories, etc.

Lastly, Tables 1I through 1K show what tunnel changes occur in the next section. If none occur, this new section can be incorporated into the preceding section by simply adding the new length onto the length of the preceding section. If side tunnels are needed, one can then use the tables for designing these branches as well. The end product is rewarding for the players and DM alike.

One caution: Don't be a slave to die rolls. Some of the choices can be mutually exclusive or highly improbable. One cannot have dusty, dry floors and at the same time have steam vapors in the air, for condensation would surely form. Further, one may adjust the design to fit the overall campaign by including cairns, graves, broken tools, and the like where desired. Use of dungeon dressing in Appendix I of the *Dungeon Masters Guide* (pages 217-220) is helpful here.

### Waterways

The design of waterways is similarly handled. Table 3A gives the length of the section. Tables 3B through 3E yield the crucial characteristics needed for travel, including the section width, water depth, ceiling height above the water level, and rate of water flow. Realize that with fast flow rates come drop-offs — small rapids and falls (these are expressed as footnotes to Table 3E). Tables 3F through 3I give the section direction, water temperature (don't forget hypothermia effects), air quality, and illumination. The chances for illumination in a water-filled passage are low because of the continual water erosion on all rock surfaces.

Next, add any special features from Tables 4A through 4D; these are added along with any of the drop-offs required by the *DSG* flow-rate tables. Again, be reasonable; if the tunnel is very small and placid, do not expect to find a whirlpool in the middle of the tunnel! Lastly, Tables 3J through 3M determine what aspects (if any) change in the next section.

I have included two examples of tunnels fleshed out with these tables. In both cases, the Underdark caverns are identified by a letter, such as cavern C. The major tunnels connecting them are identified by combining the letters of the caverns. Thus, tunnel CD connects caverns C and D. The first example is a dry tunnel and the second, a waterway.

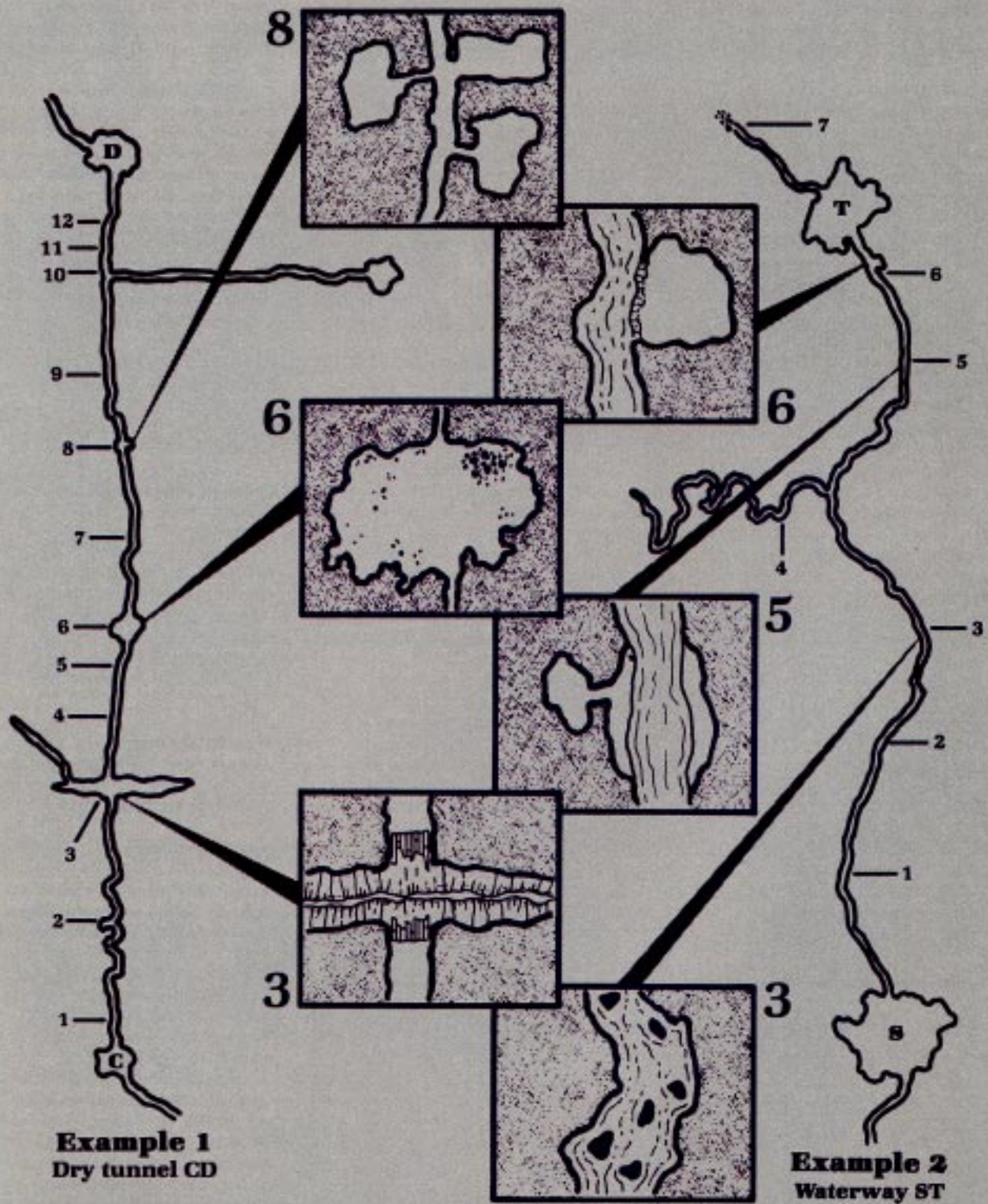
### Example 1: Dry Tunnel CD

#### General characteristics

Length: 17 miles  
Descent: 2,000'  
Slope: 2°  
Width: 15'  
Height: 15'

#### Wandering monsters

Check every six turns while moving, or three times per day while stationary. An encounter occurs on a roll of 1-2 on 1d6.



## Special features

Cavern C is home to 76 goblins. The cavern itself is roughly 300' x 400', and has an uneven ceiling ranging in height from 25-50'. Cavern D is home to several normal, underground monsters of neutral alignment (particularly hook horrors). This cavern is larger than cavern C, being 400' x 600' and having a ceiling ranging in height from 30-60'. The floor and ceiling of this cavern are covered by many of the underground formations listed on page 8 of the *DSG* (stalactites, stalagmites, columns, etc.), making cavern D convoluted in comparison to cavern C.

The tunnel connecting these caverns is nearly level, dropping almost imperceptibly downward. It has a rough, wet surface with many twists and turns. The air quality is normal, and there is no illumination.

## Tunnel map key

1. At ½ mile from C, the floor descends moderately for the next 40'. There is a chance of falling (see the *DSG*, pages 15-20, and the *WSG*, pages 33-36). Consider the floor as dry. A falling character may attempt to catch himself, if the action is attempted in time. At the end of this section, the floor becomes wet and resumes its gentle descent.

2. At 2½ miles from C, the tunnel narrows to a width of 5' and begins twisting and snaking for ¼ mile. Somewhere along this path is a wandering monster; use no large-sized monsters.

3. At 5 miles from cavern C, there is a 50'-deep chasm. This chasm is 10'-wide and totally blocks the tunnel. The remains of a stone bridge are visible. (The goblins smashed the bridge to prevent intrusion into cavern C.) On the extremely rocky floor of the chasm are 112 cp, 253 sp, and two gems (worth 50 gp and 10 gp). Broken bits of weapons can be found, along with pieces of bone from slain goblins and adventurers. In the northeastern corner of the chasm is a narrow side tunnel that runs northward. It is 5' high and 4' wide; its floor is very rocky. If the party decides to explore this tunnel, it ends after 3 miles at the edge of a subterranean creek. Fur-

ther exploration is possible only by boat.

4. At 6½ miles from C are the skeletons of three creatures: a duergar and two goblins. They have been dead for a long time. A careful study of the area reveals the signs of a skirmish, and a few bits of broken weapons litter the floor.

5. At 7½ miles from C is another steep descent. This one is slightly wet. It is classified as a "steep downward" tunnel and is 100' in length.

6. At 8 miles from C is a large chamber roughly 50' x 75'. The entire rough-walled cavern has been hand-carved. Debris litters the floor, and there is a large mound of rock in the southeast corner of the chamber. A careful inspection of the walls indicates that a vein of gold runs northwest to southeast. (The duergar dug this exploratory chamber while determining the size and extent of the vein. It is capable of producing only 10 gp worth of gold per man-week, which is why the duergar abandoned the venture.)

7. At 10 miles from C is a series of ledges on either side of the trail. These are filled with piles of small boulders. Here, the goblins intended to bombard invaders and then retreat.

8. At about 11½ miles from C are three minor side rooms occupied by wandering monsters. From here on, the tunnel narrows to 10'.

9. At 13 miles from C, a large stone cairn marks the end of goblin territory. Here, the tunnel widens to 15' again.

10. At 15 miles from C, the tunnel becomes very warm for nearly 500' (geothermal heat is responsible). There is a side tunnel running steeply downward for 5 miles, punctuated by numerous twists and turns. This tunnel is approximately 4' wide, with an average ceiling height of 3'. The increasingly hot side tunnel ends in a partially cooled bed of lava (50' x 90').

11. At 15½ miles from C is a 100' section of tunnel filled with noxious vapors. Halfway through this section is a 1" crack in the wall extending from the floor to the ceiling. This crack leads eventually to the same bed of geothermal activity as in area 10. Noxious gas continually sprays from

the crack (see the *DSG*, page 37). Beyond 50' on either side of the crack, the vapors have been diluted enough so that they are longer harmful.

12. At 16 miles from cavern C, the passage becomes very windy. As a result of this, torches are 50% likely to be blown out each round and cannot be relighted. Lanterns, if shielded, continue to burn. An inspection of the ceiling reveals a 2' circular shaft rising nearly vertically. The air rushes up the shaft. The windy condition lasts for nearly ½ mile, at which point the party discovers another similar shaft. This one, however, is in the floor and goes nearly straight down. The air rushes up out of this hole. Many miles below is a large duergar city; together, these two air shafts are part of the city's air ventilation system. If a coin or rock is dropped, no sound will be heard on landing. The shaft is miles deep. Beyond the shaft toward cavern D, the air speed is normal.

If the party attempts to detect odors here, say that there is a trace of smoke from something burning and some odors of cooking.

## Example 2: Waterway ST

### General characteristics

Length: 3 miles

Width: 20'

Water depth: 6'

Overhead clearance: 4'

Rate of flow: Medium (60' per round)

Water temperature: 40°F

Air supply: Normal

Illumination: None

Drop-offs: 10% chance of one 1-3' drop-off per mile

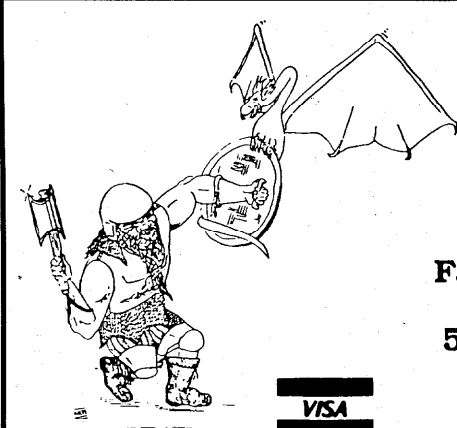
### Wandering monsters

Check every six turns while moving, or three times per day while stationary. An encounter occurs on 1-2 on 1d6.

## Special features

Cavern S is home to 37 troglodytes. The stream that constitutes waterway ST enters this cavern in the east, flows through the middle of the cavern, and exits to the west. The stream itself is 20' wide; a bridge connects the cavern floors separated by the waterway. Cavern S is 400' x 400', with a ceiling height of 25'. The floors of this cavern are made of water-smoothed limestone.

At the end of waterway ST is cavern T, an abandoned duergar mine that has filled completely with water. The cavern is roughly 100' x 200', with a ceiling height (from water level) of 15'. The cavern floor is completely submerged underwater, although a few ledges and rock escarpments jut out from the cavern walls. The water depth in this cavern is 30' in the abandoned mine's center. In the north wall of the cavern is a tunnel that formerly served as an exit from the duergar mine. (Tables follow on page 26; the text continues on page 28.)



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## Underdark Tunnel Design Tables

### Dry Tunnel Design General Characteristics Tables 1A-1K

**Table 1A**  
**Length of Section**

**1d20 Distance (dice)**

1-2	5-40' (5d8)
3-6	40-90' (30 + 10d6)
7-11	100-400' (10d4 x 10)
12-18	500-1,000' (400 + (10d6 x 10))
19-20	500-2,000' (10d4 x 50)

**Table 1B**  
**Section Height and Width**

**1d20 Type (height x width)**

1	Tiny (1' x 1')
2	Tight (2' x 2')
3-4	Crawl (3' x 3')
5-6	Wide crawl (3' x 5')
7-9	Very narrow (5' x 3')
10-13	Narrow (5' x 5')
14-18	Normal (10' x 10')
19	Wide (15' x 15')
20	Very wide (20' x 60')

**Table 1C**  
**Section Slope**

**1d20 Description (° slope)**

1	Steep up (51-70°)
2-3	Moderate up (31-50°)
4-7	Gentle up (15-30°)
8-13	Level (between 15° up and 15° down)
14-17	Gentle down (15-30°)
18-19	Moderate down (31-50°)
20	Steep down (51-70°)

**Table 1D**  
**Section Direction**

**1d20 Direction**

1-3	Curving right
4-6	Curving left
7	Sharp right
8	Sharp left
9-16	Straight
17-20	Twisting and snaking

**Table 1E**  
**Floor Texture**

**1d20 Description**

1-2	Slick/polished
3-5	Smooth
6-11	Normal
12-15	Rough
16-17	Tiered
18-19	Covered by large boulders
20	Covered by sharp rocks

**Table 1F**  
**Floor Condition**

**1d20 Description**

1	Water-filled (up to 1' deep)
2-6	Slippery (wet and slimy)
7-15	Slick (damp or wet)
16-19	Dry, good footing
20	Dusty (dead tunnel; check cave-in chances)

**Table 1H**  
**Illumination\***

**Light quality**  
**1d20 (equivalent to:)**

1-10	None
11-14	Very weak light (moonless)
15-17	Weak light (moonlight with overcast clouds)
18-19	Moderate light (moonlight with no clouds)
20	Bright light (twilight)

\* All underground illumination is assumed to come from either luminescent fungi, larvae, insects, or rocks. Shafts to the surface of the earth should be extremely rare and would provide little light. Magical light sources are always possible.

**Table 1G**  
**Air Supply**

**1d20 Description**

1	Poisonous/noxious gas
2	Stale
3-6	Faint circulation
7-13	Normal
14-16	Drafty <sup>1</sup>
17-18	Windy <sup>2</sup>
19	Rushing air <sup>3</sup>
20	Steam vapors

<sup>1</sup> 1% chance of torch blowout per round.

<sup>2</sup> 10% chance of torch blowout per round.

<sup>3</sup> 50% chance of torch blowout per round.

**Table 1I**  
**Changes Following This Section**

Step	Section change (table reference)
1	Distance must always be rerolled (Table 1A)
2	Roll the number of attributes that change (Table 1J)
3	Roll for the attribute(s) that change (Table 1K)

**Table 1J**  
**Number of Attributes That Change**

**1d20 Attribute changes**

1-5	None
6-10	1 attribute
11-14	2 attributes
15-17	3 attributes
18-19	4 attributes
20	5 attributes

**Table 1K**  
**Attributes That Change**

1d20	Section change (table reference)
1-4	Section height and width (Table 1B)
5-7	Section slope (Table 1C)
8-11	Section direction (Table 1D)
12-15	Floor texture (Table 1E)
16-17	Floor condition (Table 1F)
18	Air supply (Table 1G)
19	Illumination (Table 1H)
20	Add special feature (Table 2 group)

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## Dry Tunnel Design Special Features Tables 2A-2D

**Table 2A  
Special Features**

1d100	Features
01-30	None
31-36	Side ledges or tiers
37-43	Minor side rooms (3-60' wide x (10d20 x 10)' long)
44-46	Stairs (natural or manmade)
47-53	Side tunnels that dead-end in 1-6 miles with cross sections of 5' x 5' or less (roll 1d100 for special features; 20% are small underground streams)
54-59	Pits (3-18' deep)
60-65	Chasms (20-200' deep x 4-40' wide)
66-70	Cliffs (10-100' high)
71-75	Geothermal activity (Table 2B)
76-84	Blockages (Table 2C)
85-95	Habitation signs (Table 2D)
96-98	Minor mineral vein
99-00	DM's choice

**Table 2B  
Geothermal Activity**

1d20	Description
1-8	Hot or boiling pool of water
9-10	Poisonous/noxious gas vent
11-13	Steam vent
14-19	Hot air
20	Lava pool

**Table 2C  
Section Blockages**

1d20	Blockages
1-3	Large boulder field
4-6	Minor cave-in
7-9	Water pool
10	Quicksand
11	Oil pool
12	Tar pit
13-17	Large stalactites, stalagmites, or columns
18	Balconies
19	Waterway (random size)
20	DM's choice

**Table 2D  
Habitation Signs**

1d100	Signs of habitation
01-05	Cairn marking territory
06	Ruined building (outpost or guardpost)
07-12	Old campsite
13	Small, abandoned shrine
14-15	Dead bodies
16-17	Shallow grave
18-19	Burial mound
20-21	Secret stash
22-35	Broken tools, weapons, or armor
36-37	Intact tools, weapons, or armor
38-41	Battlefield
42-62	Worked stone surfaces
63-70	Abandoned adventurer's gear
71-89	Intact bridge
90-00	Ruined bridge

## Waterway Design General Characteristics Tables 3A-3M

**Table 3A  
Length of Section**

1d20	Distance (dice)
1-2	5-40' (5d8)
3-6	40-90' (30 + 10d6)
7-11	100-400' (10d4 x 10)
12-18	500-1,000' (400 + (10d6 x 10))
19-20	500-2,000' (10d4 x 50)

**Table 3B  
Section Width**

5d12	Description
5-20'	Narrow
20-60'	Average

**Table 3C  
Water Depth**

1d10	Depth (at tunnel's center)
1	1' or less
2-3	1-4'
4-6	5-9'
7-9	10'
10	15'

**Table 3D  
Ceiling Height**

1d10	Height (above water)
1	1' or less
2-3	1-4'
4-8	5'
9-10	10'

(continued from page 24)

The tunnel has now collapsed. Though the tunnel and stream continue to the surface, there is no room for passage; the water level reaches the ceiling of the tunnel.

Although the mine has been abandoned, a few small gold veins have not been completely tapped. Industrious players may find a way to extract these metals (worth 100-400 gp), although transporting them to the surface will be a problem.

### Waterway map key

1. At 3,000' from cavern S, the tunnel width narrows to 10'; the rate of water flow increases to 120' per round. This section is 500' long. After 3,000', there is a series of three large boulders in the middle of the stream; check for collisions.

2. At 1 mile from S, the tunnel resumes its original width and rate of water flow. Sandy beaches are on either side for the (continued on following page)

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**Table 3E**  
**Rate of Flow**

1d20	Description (flow rate)
1-4	Stagnant (0' per round)
5-9	Placid (1-40' per round)
10-15	Medium (41-120' per round) <sup>1</sup>
16-19	Rapid (121-240' per round) <sup>2</sup>
20	Cascade (241-600' per round) <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Roll of 1-2 on 1d6 results in one drop-off of 1-3' per mile.

<sup>2</sup> Roll of 1-5 on 1d6 results in 1-6 drop-offs of 1-4' per mile.

<sup>3</sup> 3-18 drop-offs of 1d8' each per mile.

**Table 3F**  
**Section Direction**

1d36	Direction
1-3	Curving right
4-6	Curving left
7	Sharp right
8	Sharp left
9-16	Straight
17-20	Twisting and snaking

**Table 3G**  
**Water Temperature**

1d20	Temperature (°F)
1	32°
2-3	33-35°
4-12	36-40°
13-15	41-45°
16-17	46-50°
18	51-80°
19	81-100°
20	100+°

**Table 3H**  
**Air Supply**

1d20	Description
1	Poison or noxious gas
2	Stale
3-6	Faint circulation
7-13	Normal
14-16	Drafty <sup>1</sup>
17-18	Windy <sup>2</sup>
19	Rushing air <sup>3</sup>
20	Steam vapors

<sup>1</sup> 1% chance of torch blowout per round.

<sup>2</sup> 10% chance of torch blowout per round.

<sup>3</sup> 50% chance of torch blowout per round.

next 500'. On the northern beach are signs of an old campsite.

3. At 1½ miles from S, six large columns partially block the tunnel; check for collisions. For the next 400', the ceiling height above the water drops to 2'.

4. At 2 miles from S, a side tunnel runs northward. It is only 5' wide and has a water depth of 3' and a head clearance of 2'. The tunnel is very twisty and dead-ends in 3 miles. At the very end, there is a small silver vein capable of producing 25 sp worth per man-week, for a total of 1,500 sp.

5. At 2½ miles from S are side ledges on either side of the tunnel. Both ledges are covered with flotsam. Various pieces of broken weapons, clothing, and other gear can be found in the drift piles. Buried in

**Table 3K**  
**Number of Attributes That Change**

**1d20 Attribute changes**

1-5	None
6-10	1 attribute
11-14	2 attributes
15-17	3 attributes
18-19	4 attributes
20	5 attributes

**Table 3L**  
**Attributes That Change**

1d20	Section change (table reference)
1-4	Section width (Table 3M)
5-6	Water depth (Table 3C)
7-8	Ceiling height (Table 3D)
9-12	Rate of flow (Table 3E)
13-16	Section direction (Table 3F)
17	Water temperature (Table 3G)
18	Air supply (Table 3H)
19	Illumination (Table 3I)
20	Add special feature (Table 4 group)

**Table 3I**  
**Illumination\***

1d20	Light quality (equivalent to:)
1-15	None
16-18	Very weak light (moonless)
19-20	Weak light (moonlight with overcast clouds)

\* All underground illumination is assumed to come from either luminescent fungi, larvae, insects, or rocks. Shafts to the surface of the earth should be extremely rare and would provide little light. Magical light sources are always possible.

**Table 3J**  
**Changes Following This Section**

Step	Section change (table reference)
1	Distance must be rerolled (Table 3A)
2	Roll number of attributes that change (Table 3K)
3	Roll attribute(s) that change (Table 3L)

**Table 3M**  
**Changes in Section Width**

1d6	Width alteration
1	Decrease width by 10' (or 5' if width is currently 10')
2-5	No change
6	Increase width by 10'

**Waterway Design**  
**Special Features Tables 4A-4D**

**Table 4A**  
**Special Features**

1d100	Features
01-25	None
26-31	Sandy beaches
32-40	Side ledges or tiers (landing is possible)
41-46	Minor side rooms that are 90% likely to be dry (3-60' wide x (10d20 x 10') long)
47-55	Side tunnels that dead-end in 1-6 miles that are only 40% likely to be dry (roll for characteristics)
56-63	Obstacles such as large boulders, columns, etc.
64-66	Rapids*
67-68	Whitewater rapids*
69	Minor waterfalls (1-4) of 1-10' each*
70	Large waves from an earthquake or cave-in
71-75	Minor mineral vein
76	Junction with a large underground river or an exit or entrance to the surface
77-78	Geothermal activity (Table 4B)
79-83	Tunnel blockages (Table 4C)
84-97	Habitation signs (Table 4D)
98-00	DM's choice

\* These are in addition to any possible drop-offs determined by the Rate of Flow table (Table 3E).

**Table 4B**  
**Geothermal Activity**

1d20	Description
1-8	Hot or boiling water
9-10	Poisonous/noxious gas vent
11-14	Steam vent
15-20	Hot air

**Table 4C**  
**Section Blockages**

1d20	Blockages
1-3	Large boulder field
4-6	Minor cave-in
7-9	Small whirlpool
11	Oil seepage forms scum on water
12-18	Large stalactites, stalagmites, or columns
19-20	DMs choice

**Table 4D**  
**Habitation Signs**

1d100	Signs of habitation
01-10	Cairn marking territory
11-13	Ruined building (outpost or guardpost)
14-25	Old campsite on ledge or beach
26-29	Small abandoned shrine
30-34	Dead bodies, on land or floating
35-36	Shallow grave on land
37	Secret stash
38	Dam
39-41	Canal
42-59	Flotsam or jetsam (broken tools, weapons, armor, or boats)
60-63	Intact tools, weapons, armor, or boats
64-74	Worked stone surfaces
75-80	Abandoned adventurer's gear
81-00	DM's choice

the debris is a badly scoured ivory carving that is worth 100 gp. On the north ledge is a small monster lair (DM's choice).

6. At 3 miles from S is a side chamber that is above water and dry. It is about 20' x 30', and is home to a wandering monster (DM's choice). It has very rough walls marked by several large cracks. The cavern shows numerous signs of flooding.

During a flood, water pours into the room from the cracks. In the northeastern corner of this small cavern is a tiny ledge covered by a patch of edible fungi which has just begun to take hold in the stony wall. Underneath the fungi patch are the rotting remains of a leather pack and clothes. In a pocket of a shirt is a forgotten earring worth 10 gp. Ω

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# The Folk of the Underworld

## *The svirfneblin point of view*

---

by Eric Oppen

---

Of all the underground-dwelling races of demi-humans, the svirfneblin, or deep gnomes, differ least in outlook from their surface-dwelling cousins. Having moved underground voluntarily (instead of fleeing a lost war, as the drow and duergar did), the svirfneblin have less animosity toward the world in general and their surface-dwelling kin in particular. [See "The Gnomish Point of View" in the *Best of DRAGON® Magazine Anthology, Volume 3.*]

### Gnomes and deep gnomes

Like surface gnomes, svirfneblin love jewels and do exquisite work with them. Their jewelry is a much-prized article of trade in the underground world, purchasing things the deep gnomes cannot make themselves. Svirfneblin and gnomes share an affinity for jewels that closely parallels the dwarven and duergar skills with metal, or the elven love of living things.

Another area of similarity between deep and surface gnomes is their sense of humor. Pranks and practical jokes are a major source of svirfneblin amusement, and are often turned into a form of defense or attack, particularly against larger races. Svirfneblin jokes tend to be grimmer than those played by surface gnomes, since many of these jokes are played on enemies. A svirfneblin who successfully defiles a shrine to Lolth without the drow catching on is regarded as a hero, just as is the surface gnome who palms off a *necklace of strangulation* on an enemy by representing it as a magical necklace of some other sort. To the svirfneblin, an enemy's discomfort is extremely humorous, particularly if it proves fatal.

Svirfneblin culture differs in several ways from that of the surface gnomes. One obvious difference is the apparent

dominance of svirfneblin males in all professions having to do with the world outside their settlements. No female svirfneblin willingly leaves the settlement, except in the case of a dire emergency. There are two reasons for this. First, the relatively low birthrate among deep gnomes makes it imperative that the females (who are much more important in a society with a low birthrate) be protected from the terrible dangers of the underworld as much as possible. Second, whereas most surface gnomes confront relatively stupid enemies such as orcs, goblins, and kobolds, deep gnomes must deal with exceptionally intelligent foes such as the derro, drow, duergar, and kuo-toans. These dangers make deep gnomes reluctant to risk their female population outside of their protected settlements. Svirfneblin do not understand or approve of female surface-gnome adventurers, and they do not like to see female adventurers of other races, though they tolerate them. They see female drow, however, as being as despicable as the males (if not worse), and they treat them both much the same.

Deep-gnome culture differs from that of surface gnomes in another way. Surface gnomes are on close terms with burrowing mammals, but svirfneblin have much more powerful allies in the form of earth elementals. It is said that the first rulers of the deep gnomes forged this relationship by signing treaties and making alliances with the leaders of the earth elementals. In any case, those who would otherwise have exterminated the deep gnomes tread cautiously around them, since many svirfneblin can summon up powerful help on short notice. The dangers of their environment make this alliance of great benefit to deep gnomes.

For the sake of game balance, deep-gnome PCs have a greatly reduced chance of summoning earth elementals (as noted in *Unearthed Arcana*, page 11; otherwise,

everyone may want to be a svirfneblin, and svirfneblin PCs will be much too powerful. Perhaps a svirfneblin PC should be required to go through a lot of effort to summon an earth elemental, requiring about six hours of absolute rest afterward. Otherwise, a svirfneblin PC should have only a 5-10% chance per level of successfully performing such a summoning.

### Character classes

Svirfneblin clerics are usually very influential in their communities. They act as judges, doling out rewards as well as punishments to those who deserve them. The svirfneblin realize that, in the threatening environment in which they live, peaceful arbitration of disputes is essential to survival. As a result, svirfneblin clerics usually have numerous healing spells at their command; they also usually have a number of spells designed to allow the user to find out the truth. In case of squabbles within the group, the svirfneblin cleric usually does his utmost to work up a solution that is agreeable to both sides. When negotiations with other races are necessary, svirfneblin clerics usually speak for their people.

Svirfneblin fighters have a lot in common, mentally, with their surface-dwelling cousins. These characters see themselves as "giant killers," much as do surface gnomes. When enemies are physically smaller than the deep gnomes (as are the jermlaine), the svirfneblin are usually more merciful than they would be to larger opponents. Resentment of being "talked down to" by larger folk runs deeply and bitterly with this race.

Like their surface-dwelling kin, deep-gnome fighters have no inhibitions about using various tricks and traps to make up for their relatively small size. A wily svirfneblin general can earn a wonderful reputation as a warrior without ever fighting a pitched battle. Because of their low birthrate, svirfneblin do not regard each other as expendable, and every possible avenue is explored to avoid direct confrontations with foes.

Svirfneblin illusionists hold very high status among their fellows. Other deep gnomes respect the long hours of study that are necessary to train an illusionist, and a well-placed illusion has saved many a svirfneblin community. Only the fact that some of their worst enemies, such as the duergar, are immune to illusion spells limits illusionists' usefulness. Conscious of their high standing, svirfneblin illusionists are usually full of pride in their accomplishments — "cocky" describes their manner well.

Svirfneblin thieves and thief-acrobats usually take up the trade for the same reasons members of other underground-dwelling races do: to serve their community and people by plundering enemy goods, to aid exploration parties with their skills at climbing and lock-picking, and to strike from the shadows at the backs of

enemies. Like other gnomish thieves, svirfneblin of this class adore puzzles and often try to steal something thought unquestionably safe, merely to find out if it can be done.

Svirfneblin assassins are the grimmest of their race. Like other gnomes, they enjoy a joke, but they prefer "gallows humor" over anything else. They hold higher status among svirfneblin than surface-gnome assassins do in their societies, for the same reasons that other underground-dwelling peoples grant assassins higher status than they receive on the surface. Open warfare or interclan feuding could spell universal doom; thus, when a deep gnome is sentenced to death, an assassin is usually dispatched to do the job. As with other underground peoples, assassins also do much of the fighting against enemies of other races. Since deep gnomes are small and, some think, easy to enslave, the presence of assassins among them is one way to ensure that slavers will probably regret it bitterly. Assassins are sometimes added to commando-style raiding parties, with orders to eliminate certain powerful opponents during the raid. Assassin guilds do not exist as such among the svirfneblin, though informal networks exist through which they gain their training.

Since the deep gnomes have long childhoods (which often last for the better part of a century), multiclassed svirfneblin are not uncommon. If a young deep gnome is seen as having talent in more than one area, he receives training in more than one profession. Multi-classed deep gnomes hold higher status than single-classed ones do, and in the councils, their word usually carries much weight.

#### Underground neighbors

Svirfneblin live in a dark, dangerous world, and have many enemies, but the most bitter feud is the one they carry on with the drow. Svirfneblin and drow hate each other, and both sides delight in mutual torment. Svirfneblin often force drow prisoners to slaughter spiders, and the drow retaliate with interest when they catch svirfneblin. Competition for food, living space, and gems embitters relations already poisoned by the difference in alignment between drow and svirfneblin.

The svirfneblin hardly know that surface elves exist. When they first encounter surface elves, svirfneblin are usually nonplussed at finding elves with such different coloring, who do not worship Lolth, and who share a lot of their outlook with the deep gnomes. Once their initial suspicion is overcome, the svirfneblin will be very curious about surface elves, peppering them with questions about their lives.

The second most bitter feud carried on by the svirfneblin is with the duergar. The gray dwarves and svirfneblin compete for food and living space, as do the deep gnomes and drow. Dwarven greed, inflamed to a white heat in the duergar by their worship of Abbathor (*Unearthed*

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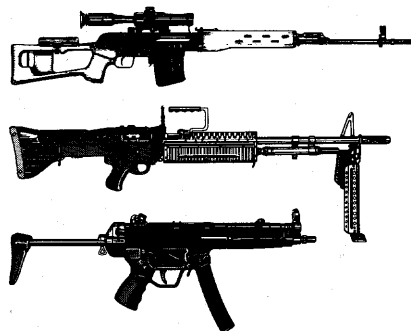
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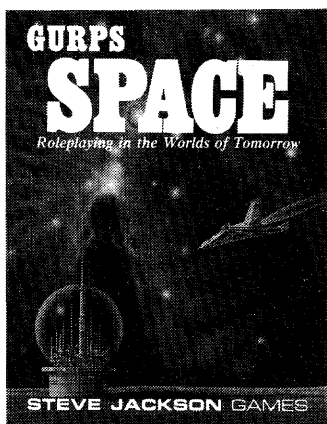


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*Arcana*, page 111), makes them passionate hunters of deep-gnome caches of gems. Not surprisingly, the deep gnomes retaliate whenever possible. One revenge tactic the svirfneblin favor is slipping into a duergar treasure vault and emptying it out, then putting a few traps on it that the gray dwarves aren't aware of. When the two races manage to meet peacefully, the svirfneblin are incapable of understanding the duergars' regard for dignity, and find it difficult to resist playing pranks on these stolid folk. Puncturing the dignity of others is regarded as great fun, but it does get the svirfneblin into many fights.

Svirfneblin regard other dwarves with some suspicion — at least until the surface dwarves establish clearly that they are not in sympathy with the duergar. Svirfneblin pranks are not popular with surface dwarves, but the absence of a history of warfare between the races keeps the pranks under control.

Svirfneblin barely know halflings exist. The halfling life of peaceful pastoralism generally appeals to deep gnomes, although the deep gnomes have a hard time believing that life can really be that quiet and peaceful. When svirfneblin and halflings meet, the halflings' small size helps the svirfneblin feel friendlier and less threatened. Of course, svirfneblin who've lost cherished jewels to halfling thieves are an exception to this rule.

Svirfneblin do not like half-orcs any more than they do other humanoids, such as orcs or goblins. Since svirfneblin live a lot farther down in the underworld than orcs generally do, they seldom meet half-orcs, although they are aware of the well-earned reputation half-orcs have on the surface. A party containing half-orcs can expect a chillier reception from deep gnomes than would otherwise be the case, but this reception will not be as bad as that given if the party included drow or duergar. To the deep gnomes, their occasional run-ins with orcs are not nearly as pressing a problem as their wars with other horrors of the underworld. Most deep gnomes would much rather deal with a whole tribe of orcs than with one mind flayer.

Humans are viewed neutrally by deep gnomes. In general, humans meeting deep gnomes can expect the same treatment they afford the svirfneblin. As with any outsiders, the deep gnomes will play pranks, but no real harm is ever intended, unless the humans intend to harm the pranksters. Svirfneblin respect humans with abilities they don't have, such as the ability to use magic. Humans who have attained higher levels in classes available to the svirfneblin are also treated with respect. Often, the svirfneblin make offers to hire humans with skills they need. The deep gnomes can be trusted in these deals, and humans taking up their offers can expect to return to the surface when their contracts are completed much richer than they left it.



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# The Ecology of the Aboleth

*The type best known is also the least dangerous*

---

by **Brandon Grist**

---

*The following information on aboleth is based on testimony given to a group of adventurers by the dark-elf sage Alzor, just hours before his mysterious disappearance. Alzor was known to be fair and honest, and his information about the Underdark and its denizens had always been reliable.*

The aboleth are perhaps the least well-known and the most misunderstood of all the races which inhabit the Underdark. The reason for this is very simple — the aboleth want it that way. The bulk of their population dwells in seclusion in the great, sunless seas found deep beneath the surface of the earth. Only the weakest aboleth are encountered near the surface, and it is from these creatures that the vast majority of surface-dwellers have drawn what little knowledge they have of this race. Because of the unfortunate misconceptions which arise from this practice, it is necessary to explain the true nature of the aboleth.

In general, all aboleth are cruel, emotionless, and logical. All are extremely intelligent — some even more so than the most ancient of elven mages. They are believed to live for thousands of years, but exact information is difficult to gain for obvious reasons.<sup>1</sup> Over their many years of existence, the aboleth have developed a society which far exceeds that of man in its efficiency. In this society, each aboleth has a specific duty which it performs with the utmost skill. There are four major roles in the aboleth society. In increasing order of importance, these roles are: slave-gathering, slave maintenance, scientific research and experimentation, and ruling.

The role of slave-gathering is delegated to the common aboleth with which most surface-dwellers are familiar.<sup>2</sup> Such an aboleth resembles a large, blue-green fish which lacks all fins but the caudal. It has a head with three large, slitlike eyes and four long tentacles. Its mouth is like a great sucker and can be found on the underside of the head section. On each of its sides can be found four tubelike orifices which excrete a vile slime. This common aboleth is about 20' long from tail to head, and has 10'-long tentacles. It is clumsy on land and is usually encountered in underground lakes. Despite its good combat abilities, this creature prefers to attack with a mental ability which allows it to *enslave* those with weak minds. It also possesses illusion-casting abilities used to hide itself while hunting for slaves. In general, it is wise not to get close to one of these creatures, for not only is the slime they excrete hazardous to all air-breathing creatures, but their very skin can cause serious tissue damage if touched to exposed flesh. It is important to note that these slave-gathering monsters are also the *weakest* of their kind.

Slaves gathered by the common aboleth are routinely brought back to certain floating cities in these underground seas in which the more powerful aboleth dwell.<sup>3</sup> This collection process, along with further maintenance of slaves, is the responsibility of the greater aboleth. These creatures resemble their lesser brothers in every way, but are considerably larger. They average 30' in length and weigh several tons. They are also more intelligent than the common aboleth. They have most of the same powers possessed by the common aboleth, but their *enslavement* ability is more developed. Generally speaking,

anyone *enslaved* by one of these creatures never sees the upper world again. There may be as many as a dozen of these creatures in a single aboleth city, each maintaining a separate group of slaves.

The purpose of slaves in the aboleth society is quite different from what would normally be expected. Though slaves may have been used originally to aid in the construction of aboleth cities, these cities generally lack any kind of significant slave population. Instead, most slaves dwell on the shores of the lakes on which the cities float. There, the slaves serve both as guards and as playthings for the cruel aboleth, who pit slaves against one another in strange spectacles of combat. The exact purpose of this practice is not clear, though it may be a way of eliminating the weak in the breeding of a race of subterranean slaves.

In order to fully understand the next major class in aboleth society, that of the noble, it is first necessary to establish the point that the aboleth have chosen the path of science over that of magic. Consequently, they have no wizards or conjurers as do other races. Noble aboleth, the scientists of the race, are fantastically intelligent and ever seek to increase their powers through bizarre means.<sup>4</sup> In general, they are similar in appearance to the common aboleth. Unlike common aboleth, noble aboleth have an enlarged head section, and they have two slender arms, each ending in three highly dextrous fingers, instead of their two uppermost tentacles. These latter appendages are used for more delicate work.<sup>5</sup> These scientist-types possess most of the other abilities common to aboleth, as well as a few mental powers which are useful in their research. Though the full extent of the aboleth's scientific knowledge can only be guessed at, it is certain that it is, at the very least, comparable to the magical knowledge possessed by the dwellers of the upper world. Each city usually holds about half a dozen of these noble aboleth.

The last major role in aboleth society is that of command, which is the responsibility of the greatest class of aboleth. Physically, ruler aboleth resemble common aboleth, but each is about 40' long and more intelligent than even the nobles. Each city has but one ruler, and it is his job to maintain order. To better accomplish this, the ruler has some sort of mental link with all of his subjects.<sup>6</sup> As their knowledge increases, so does the ruler's. Rulers possess all other aboleth abilities and should be regarded as dangerous in the extreme.

An aboleth feeds mainly on microscopic organisms which abound in its natural habitat, but it can also consume larger prey if necessary.<sup>7</sup> Aboleth can survive in both air and water, but prefer water for obvious reasons. Every aboleth has both male and female reproductive organs, though mating is rare and is restricted between aboleth of the same class.<sup>8</sup>

Because of their nonmagical nature, aboleth have a measure of resistance to spells similar to the spell-resistance of dwarves. This resistance grows greater as the aboleth's size and power increase.<sup>9</sup> All aboleth have psionic powers commensurate with their level of intelligence, and the most intelligent have powers which rival those of the illithids who, like all of the other subterranean races, have a healthy fear of the aboleth.

In closing, it is worthy to note that rumors exist of a grand aboleth, a creature so immense that it dwarfs even the rulers. If so, then perhaps it is better that surface and subterranean dwellers alike leave the aboleth to do as they please.

#### Notes

1. Common aboleth have a life span of about 2,000 years. Greater and noble aboleth live to be about 3,000 years old. Rulers can live as long as five millennia, while the grand aboleth may well be immortal.

2. The common aboleth is simply the monster as outlined in the *Monster Manual II*, with slight modifications as noted herein. The illusion-casting power mentioned in this paragraph is equal to the ability to cast *phantasmal force* (with auditory effects as well as visual ones) at will, once per round.

3. When a common aboleth enslaves a total of seven creatures (regardless of their hit dice), a greater and noble aboleth arrive using *probability travel* and take the slaves back to their city. Each greater aboleth has as many as five common aboleth gathering slaves for it. It takes from 2-8 turns for the greater and noble aboleth to arrive, though they are alerted immediately by *telepathy* when the quota is met.

4. Nobles use their ability of *probability travel*, as well as many strange drugs and devices, to travel to alternate Prime Material planes. There they amass as much knowledge as possible while *enslaving* any who oppose them. Occasionally, several nobles and a dozen or so common aboleth mount a raid into a particularly promising world, but this is rare.

5. These appendages are also capable of using technological items. The aboleth nobles have developed several potent offensive weapons and do not hesitate to use them if they feel the need exists. Note that they do not care for magic, and will not use items such as wands, rods, staves, etc. Magical treasures are locked in vaults as curios or are destroyed.

6. This *telepathy* has a range of 100 miles and allows complete communication with all subject aboleth in that range. Note that all other types of aboleth can and do communicate by telepathic means, though this has a range of no more than 20 miles and must be used consciously. They can also communicate with other intelligent creatures by these means, with a range of 100 yards, but seldom do so.

7. The aboleth does not have an effective

biting attack because of the position of its mouth. If, for some reason, its opponent is immobilized, the aboleth may elect to consume its victim. If it chooses to do so, it receives but one biting attack per round. Damage varies with the type of aboleth; common ones do 3-18 hp damage per bite and swallow whole on a roll of 20, greater and noble aboleth do 4-24 hp damage and swallow whole on a roll of 19 or 20, and ruler aboleth do 5-30 hp damage and swallow whole on a roll of 18, 19 or 20. The grand aboleth never attacks in this way. Those swallowed take one quarter of their maximum normal hit points in damage each round until they die.

8. Most aboleth mate about once every 500 years. Each participant has one egg which it deposits in a safe place about a week after fertilization. This egg is surrounded by a thick cocoon of slime that protects and nourishes the egg. The egg begins about the size of a human head,

but over the course of five years it grows to be about 6' long. At this point, the aboleth hatches and begins a quick, one-year mutation into a miniature version of its parent. It takes about 10 more years before the aboleth reaches its adult stage, and during this time it is carefully guarded by other aboleth or, occasionally, by slaves. Ruler aboleth mate only once in their lives, and the growth process takes a total of about one hundred years, though it is the same in its various stages. Some noble aboleth have performed occasional cloning experiments, but one has yet to meet with any great success.

9. Because of their nonmagical nature, all aboleth gain a bonus to save versus spells equal to their hit dice divided by four, rounded up. This applies to all aboleth, including common ones (which get a bonus of +2). Also note that rulers and the grand aboleth are immune to some illusions due to their high intelligence.

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#### GREATER ABOLETH

FREQUENCY: *Extremely rare*

NO. APPEARING: 1-3 (7-12 in city)

ARMOR CLASS: 3

MOVE: 3"/21"

HIT DICE: 12-14

% IN LAIR: 90%

TREASURE TYPE: A (x2) (with /R, S, T, U in city)

NO. OF ATTACKS: 4 tentacles

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 4-10 (x4)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *See below*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *See below*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*

INTELLIGENCE: *Exceptional*

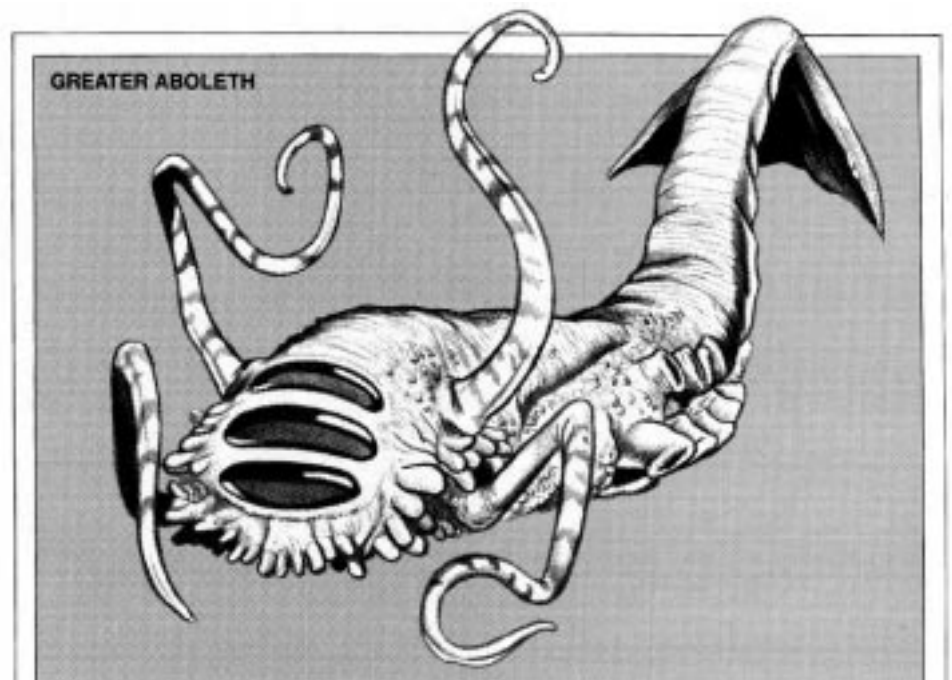
ALIGNMENT: *Lawful evil*

SIZE: L

PSIONIC ABILITY: 280

Attack/Defense Modes: B, C, D, E/F, G, I, J  
LEVEL/XP VALUE: 12 HD: VIII/4,400 + 16  
per hit point; 13-14 HD: IX/6,100 + 18  
per hit point

Greater aboleth are simply larger, more intelligent versions of the common aboleth. They are normally only encountered in an aboleth city, although they are occasionally found in some other underground locale pursuing some strange, dark purpose. Their purpose in the aboleth society is to control the slave population, which they do with unrelenting cruelty. They possess *enslavement* powers superior to those of common aboleth, having a range of 60' and usable a number of times per day equal to the aboleth's hit dice. The save vs. spells is at -4, and only a *limited wish*, *wish*, or *alter reality* spell can counter it (though *enslavement* ends if the aboleth is killed as well). If more than two miles ever separate slave and master, the slave is entitled to another saving throw (still at -4). A hit from the tentacle of a greater aboleth has the same effect as that of the common aboleth, though its size



and strength result in 4-10 rather than 1-6 hp damage per hit. Greater aboleth produce slime just as the common aboleth, but in a 2' radius. Greater aboleth possess the psionic disciplines of *body equilibrium*, *ESP*, *levitation*, and *dimension door*, all at a

level of mastery equal to their hit dice.

The illusion-casting power of a greater aboleth is its ability to cast *improved phantasmal force* once per round, with auditory and visual effects, at will.

## NOBLE ABOLETH

FREQUENCY: *Extremely rare*  
 NO. APPEARING: 1-2 (3-8 in city)  
 ARMOR CLASS: 3  
 MOVE: 3"/15"  
 HIT DICE: 16-28  
 % IN LAIR: 95%  
 TREASURE TYPE: E, F, X (with R, S, T, V in city)  
 NO. OF ATTACKS: 4 tentacles  
 DAMAGE/ATTACK: 2-16 (x2)/2-5 (x2)  
 SPECIAL ATTACKS: *See below*  
 SPECIAL DEFENSES: *See below*  
 MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*  
 INTELLIGENCE: *Genius*  
 ALIGNMENT: *Lawful evil*  
 SIZE: L  
 PSIONIC ABILITY: 310  
 Attack/Defense Modes: *All/all*  
 LEVEL/X.P. VALUE: 16 HD: IX/8,100 + 20/hp; 17-18 HD: X/10,100 + 25 per hit point

The noble aboleth is an extremely powerful version of the common aboleth which has mutated in several ways so as to accomplish its duties. It is almost never encountered outside an aboleth city, where its role is that of the scientist. It does research, conducts experiments, and travels to alternate worlds to gather infor-

mation. There are two major differences in appearance between the noble and common aboleth. First, the noble aboleth's head is slightly larger than that of a common or greater aboleth. This makes its movement through water a bit more difficult. Second, two of the noble's tentacles are smaller and end in three fingers, which allow it to do very complicated and delicate work. These tentacles can still be used in combat, but they also can be used to manipulate items or devices (though they never use melee weapons). A hit from any of these tentacles has the same effect as a hit from a common aboleth. Nobles have *enslavement* abilities equal to those of common aboleth and secrete slime in a 3' radius. They possess the ability to cast *spectral force* spells at will, once per round. Noble aboleth have very powerful psionic abilities and can use the disciplines of *body equilibrium*, *cell adjustment*, *ESP*, *body control*, and *probability travel*. All of these disciplines are performed at a level of mastery equal to the aboleth's hit dice.

The exact nature of the various technological weaponry and devices created by noble aboleth is left to the DM to design. Helpful guidelines may be found in DRAGON® issue #114 ("Hi-tech Hijinks," page 84). Most such devices should parallel or duplicate magical devices in effect.

## RULER ABOLETH

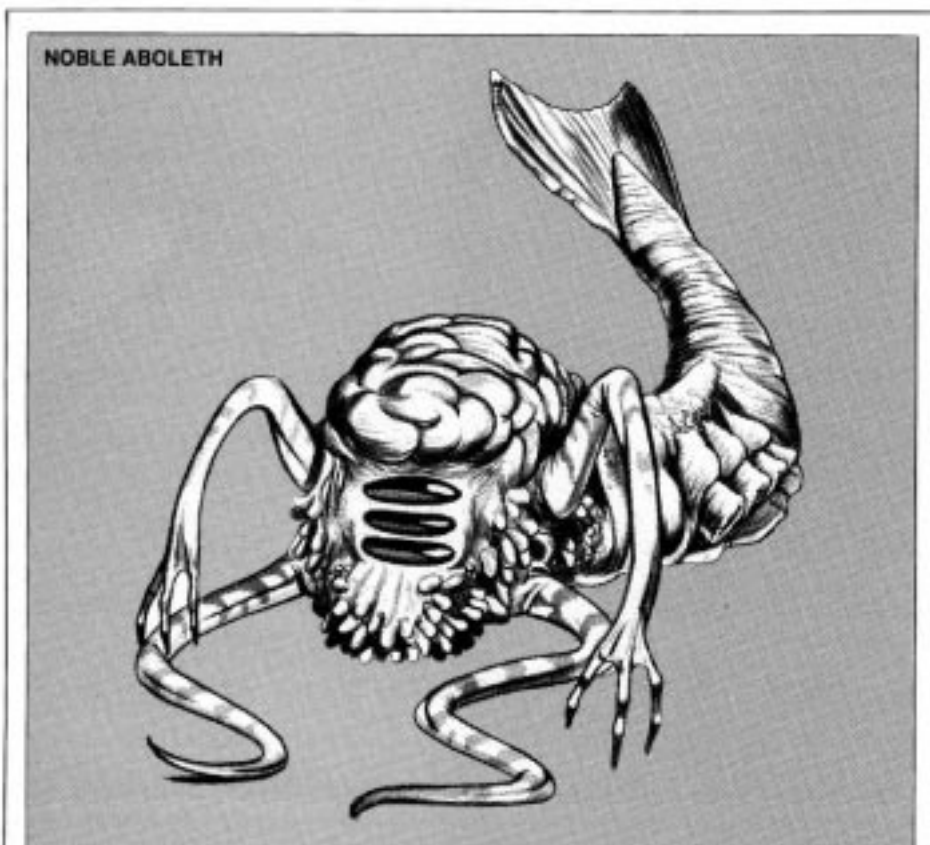
FREQUENCY: *Extremely rare*  
 NO. APPEARING: 1  
 ARMOR CLASS: 1  
 MOVE: 3"/21"  
 HIT DICE: 20-22  
 % IN LAIR: 100%  
 TREASURE TYPE: H, R, S, T, V  
 NO. OF ATTACKS: 4  
 DAMAGE/ATTACK: 5-20 (x 4)  
 SPECIAL ATTACKS: *See below*  
 SPECIAL DEFENSES: *See below*  
 MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*  
 INTELLIGENCE: *Supra-genius*  
 ALIGNMENT: *Lawful evil*  
 SIZE: L  
 PSIONIC ABILITY: 340  
 Attack/Defense Modes: *All/all*  
 LEVEL/X.P. VALUE: 20 HD: X/15,700 + 30 per hit point; 21-22 HD: X/19,200 + 35 per hit point

These huge, bloated monstrosities are the largest and most intelligent of all aboleth (aside from the grand aboleth). Each rules an aboleth city and is never encountered anywhere else, except when it must mate (and must therefore travel to another city using psionic means). Its telepathic link with its subjects allows it to be constantly aware of everything going on in its realm. Rulers are, in most other respects, similar to common and greater aboleth. They possess *enslavement* abilities equal to those of greater aboleth and can generate *veil* spells at will. Rulers can generate slime in a 5' radius, and the mere sight of one causes *fear* in all beings of less than 5th level or five hit dice. They have extremely potent psionics and may use the disciplines of *body equilibrium*, *cell adjustment*, *clairvoyance*, *ESP*, *astral projection*, *body control*, and *dimension door* at a level of mastery equal to their hit dice.

## GRAND ABOLETH

FREQUENCY: *Unique*  
 NO. APPEARING: 1  
 ARMOR CLASS: 0  
 MOVE: 3"/24"  
 HIT DICE: 40 (182 hp)  
 % IN LAIR: 100%  
 TREASURE TYPE: H (x2), R, S, T (x2), V  
 NO. OF ATTACKS: 4  
 DAMAGE/ATTACK: 5-30 (x4)  
 SPECIAL ATTACKS: *See below*  
 SPECIAL DEFENSES: *See below*  
 MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*  
 INTELLIGENCE: *Godlike*  
 ALIGNMENT: *Lawful evil*  
 SIZE: L  
 PSIONIC ABILITY: 370  
 Attack/Defense Modes: *All/all*  
 LEVEL/XP VALUE: X/32,000

The grand aboleth is quite simply the largest aboleth in existence on a particular world. It is not only incredibly huge (about





RULER ABOLETH

70' long with ten 30'-long tentacles), but also vastly intelligent. It has a telepathic link with every ruler aboleth on its world (within a range of 10,000 miles), effectively giving it complete knowledge of all that goes on within its empire. It can attack physically with great effect and exudes slime in a 20' radius. Its psionic powers are unmatched by any other aboleth, and it has the disciplines of *body equilibrium*, *cell adjustment*, *detection of good or evil*, *detection of magic*, *ESP*, *levitation*, *mind over body*, *astral projection*, *body control*, *energy control*, and *probability travel*, all performed at the 25th level of mastery. The grand aboleth also has *enslavement* powers equal to those of a greater aboleth and can create very effective illusions (save at -4). This monster dwells in a vast chamber in the midst of the largest aboleth city, which floats on the lowest portion of the worlds underground seas.

The illusion powers of the grand aboleth are equivalent to the spell capability of an 18th-level illusionist. The choice of the monster's spells are left to the DM to decide. The grand aboleth may also generate *veil* spells at will, one per round.

#### Final note

This article is intended to make the aboleth not only more complete, but more powerful. It is important to bear in mind at all times that the aboleth are extremely intelligent and have managed to maintain their control of the lowest depths of the Underdark for many thousands of years. No party of bold adventurers should ever be able to topple this mighty empire with ease. The grand aboleth is included only as the icing on the cake; actually meeting it would be nearly impossible, and it would require heroic effort to overcome.



Illustrations by Jim Holloway

GRAND ABOLETH



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# Lords & Legends

*"Short" does not mean "harmless"*

*Two of the inhabitants of our "Lords & Legends" files are interesting because they are dwarves — both from the WORLD OF GREYHAWK® fantasy setting. They're the only dwarves we have on file, but what dwarves they are!*

## Kordan Badaxe

Male mountain dwarf  
9th-level fighter  
Created by: Steve Seguin

ARMOR CLASS: 1 (dexterity bonus and chain mail +1)

MOVE: 6"

HIT POINTS: 93

NO. OF ATTACKS: 2 with hand axes (specialization, see below); 3/2 with other melee weapons

ATTACK BONUSES: +2 for strength bonus; +1 with hand axe for weapon-specialization bonus; +4 with magical axes; +2 with hurled missiles for dexterity bonus; and +1 vs. ogres, trolls, ogre magi; giants, and titans (unique ability; see below)

DAMAGE/ATTACK: By weapon type (+3 for strength bonus, +2 weapon-specialization bonus with hand axes, double damage +4 with magical axes)

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Uses two weapons in unique attack sequence (see below); owns magical devices; bonuses for high strength, dexterity and constitution; weapon specialization (hand axe); +5 to saves vs. wands, staves, rods, spells, or poison; 60' infravision; detect sloping passages 75%, new construction 75%, sliding/shifting walls 662/3%, traps involving stonework 50%, depth 50%; -4 to be hit by ogres, trolls, ogre magi, giants, or titans

MAGIC RESISTANCE: Standard

ALIGNMENT: Neutral good

PSIONIC ABILITY: Nil

S: 18/58 I: 13 W: 14  
D: 17 C: 18 CH: 15\* CO: 13\*  
\* +1 to other dwarves.

AGE: 62 SIZE: S  
HT: 4' WT: 150 lbs.  
HAIR: Brown EYES: Blue

POSSESSIONS: Two axes of hurling +4, chain mail +1, and 1-2 random potions  
TREASURE: 3-30 cp, 1-20 sp, 5-50 ep, 10-100gp, 1-20 pp

Kordan Badaxe is a mountain dwarf with some standing among his peers. Kordan's appearance is average, with his only exceptional features being his deep blue eyes — rare indeed for a dwarf.

Born of common parents, Kordan learned to use his strength and fighting skills to earn a living. He joined a dwarven army but soon grew bored with the endless routine that came with military

life. Instead, he longed for excitement and adventure.

When guards were being recruited to protect an advance mining settlement, Kordan quickly volunteered. A vein of precious metals had been discovered at the point where the Jotens meet the Little Hills (see the WORLD OF GREYHAWK fantasy setting map, hex H5-159). The small group of miners, along with accompanying guards, were to begin mining and to set up the foundations of a larger operation if the vein proved lucrative.

A year later, the mine was producing more silver and mithral ore than was originally foreseen. By this time, Kordan had worked himself up the ranks to the position of sergeant of his squad. During a routine patrol, Kordan's squad was attacked by a large group of vicious giant-type creatures. The raiders, mostly ogres and ettins led by a dozen hill giants, were lured to the area by the dwarven ore strikes. With their brute strength and large numbers, the giants destroyed the





Illustrations by Jim Holloway

patrol before word could be sent back to the mine. Kordan was hit by a boulder thrown during the fighting and was knocked down the side of a canyon into a swift mountain stream. The attackers then surprised the mine and enslaved the dwarves in order to continue tapping the mountain's wealth.

Kordan washed up a few miles from Datmil, a small trading town at the foot of the mountains. After he recovered, the dwarf rounded up a group of adventurers to return to the mine and free his people. Kordan and the five adventurers made it to the mine safely and entered undetected through one of the many ventilation shafts. After a few skirmishes, they located the slave pens. Once the dwarves were freed, they armed themselves as best they could. Under Kordan's command, the miners forced the giants to retreat deep into the mine; the miners then destroyed the supports and collapsed the section of the mine in which the giants were trapped.

It was during this fierce fighting that Kordan earned the nickname "Badaxe" as he wreaked havoc amongst the enemy. Kordan would hurl one of his axes with deadly accuracy, strike a second opponent with the axe in his hand, then whirl to catch the thrown axe as it returned. He did this with a frightening efficiency that allowed him to kill six of the hill giants and a score of ogres in his first major battle. Additionally, his intense hatred of giant-related races now overrides his feelings about humanoid races like orcs and goblins, and he gains a bonus to hit giants in

combat (but not against the humanoids).

Kordan was made a dwarven lord for his heroism. Shortly thereafter, he constructed a great fortified stronghold in the Jotens as a bastion against further attacks by the giants. Kordan may presently be found in this area, where he patrols his holdings. Despite his serious nature, Kordan is good company (in a dwarven sort of way). He warms up quickly to parties containing dwarves or rangers, a class he respects due to his hatred of giants.

### Gnarly Bones

Male mountain dwarf  
9th-level fighter  
Created by: Christopher Jones

ARMOR CLASS: 1 (*plate mail and shield +1*)  
MOVE: 6"  
HIT POINTS: 75  
NO. OF ATTACKS: 3/2 *with melee weapons*  
ATTACK BONUS: +1 *versus orcs, half-orcs, goblins, or hobgoblins*  
DAMAGE/ATTACK: *By weapon type (+1 for strength bonus)*  
SPECIAL ABILITIES: +4 *to saves vs. wands, staves, rods, spells, or poison; 60' infravision; detect sloping passages 75%, new construction 75%, sliding/shifting walls 66 2/3%, traps involving stonework 50%, depth 50%; -4 to be hit by ogres, trolls, ogre magi, giants, or titans*  
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*  
ALIGNMENT: *Chaotic good*  
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

S: 16      I: 12      W: 12  
D: 14      C: 15      CH: 10\*      CO: 13\*  
\* +1 to other dwarves.

AGE: 51      SIZE: S  
HT: 4'5"      WT: 170 lbs.  
HAIR: Red      EYES: Brown

POSSESSIONS: Hand axe +2, shield +1, ring of levitation, and ring of the ram  
TREASURE: 2-20 cp, 3-30 sp, 6-60 ep, 4-40 gp, 1-20 pp

Little is known of the early years of Gnarly Bones. His father was a prominent dwarven lord of his clan, and Gnarly was his first-born child. Gnarly stood to inherit his father's position and influence, but for some reason fell into disfavor with his father and left his homeland. Several speculations have been made regarding this event. Some believe Gnarly may have dishonored his father by refusing to join the dwarven army; still others believe Gnarly killed a member of the clan and was banished from dwarven society as fitting punishment. For whatever reason, Gnarly never returned to the kingdom.

Gnarly proceeded to travel throughout Oerth, his primary concern at this time being one of self-indulgence. Gnarly handled his activities with great levity, and became involved in a number of misadven-

tures. Sometime later, he met Sir Sarvairius of Andairfels. Despite their radically different personalities, the two became steadfast friends.

After adventuring together for a short period of time, Gnarly and Sarvairius joined a group involved in a quest to capture a demon-witch. During this quest, Gnarly was severely wounded by a fire-based trap. He was saved by the group's cleric, but his beard (a dwarfs badge of honor) was completely burned off and could not grow back.

During the remainder of the quest, and throughout subsequent adventures, Gnarly proceeded to build a name for himself. Though he did not become as famous as the demon's slayer, the legends of the bare-faced dwarf are told in many cities and towns.

Gnarly journeyed with Sarvairius until the latter received his title and barony. At that time, Gnarly settled down in Andair City (Sarvairius's capital). There, he became well-acquainted with local law enforcement officials. Gnarly's quest for pleasure led him into every kind of trouble; only his friendship with Sarvairius kept him from punishment more severe than a few days in jail.

About this time, Andair City was attacked by sorcery and transferred into an other-dimensional area called the DemonRealm (possibly a part of the Abyss). With the city under constant siege, Gnarly's fighting skills were greatly taxed. Gnarly rose to the occasion by providing untiring assistance during the siege. Because of his unyielding resolve, Gnarly earned the love and respect of the citizens of Andair City. He became a patron hero of that city, his popularity second only to that of Sarvairius.

When the city was later sent to the alternate Prime Material world of Wireld, Gnarly helped Sarvairius carve out the realm of Andairia. Through these trials, Gnarly's personality underwent a change and he matured greatly. He gave up his epicurean pursuits and assumed a number of local responsibilities. In time, Gnarly built a vast mansion under the mountains of north Andairia. In gratitude for the aid he had given Sarvairius and Andairia, Gnarly was given the title of Earl. He was also given dominion over the mountains in which he settled, which Sarvairius later named the Gnarly Peaks.

While a vassal of Sarvairius, Gnarly is the Earl of the Gnarly Peaks; he holds dominion over thousands of dwarves who live in those mountains. If encountered, Gnarly does not reveal his true position or skill at arms. Likewise, he provides little assistance to gray elves (unless they are in extreme danger) due to his hatred for that race. If asked for assistance, Gnarly gives aid or advice in areas in which he has knowledge. Gnarly is quick to anger and slow to forgive. At times he reverts to his former, troublesome personality, which can cause problems.



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by **Michael Persinger**

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*From an address by the esteemed scholar Ferba to the assembled Guild of Naturalists of Quardolf City:*

Understandably, little research has been done on the creature we know as the hook horror. I have spent the last few months laboring to learn all I can of this creature's habits and, as you can see, my colleagues have supplied me with a perfect, albeit dead, fully grown specimen. Take a good look, for few specimens exist in such an excellently preserved state.

The monster is bipedal and of ogre size, this specimen being 9'2" tall. Its head resembles a bony vulture's head with a crest of red feathers at its neck. At each wrist (where one would expect to find a hand) is a large metallic-gray talon and a tuft of red feathers. Its chest and back are protected by thick, natural plating. The beast's arms and legs are covered with a similar material, though of lesser strength.

I would like to call your attention to the armor plating that covers the creature's body. Constructed of chitinous material, these plates function as the hook horror's bones — an exoskeleton similar in many respects to those of the common grasshopper, crab, and most arthropods. This mail-like material becomes exceedingly strong with the buildup of calcium deposits from the creature's diet — deposits that rival dwarven steel for strength — and this armor has deflected many a sword. So powerful is this creature's exoskeleton that a few blacksmiths have experimentally crafted the plates into suits of armor<sup>1</sup>, and a few ogres from the great caverns to the north have used crude forms of such suits in battle.

But forgive me; we are a guild of naturalists. Associating with my bodyguards — without them I would not be able to safely carry out my observances — has moved me to think in their perspective. Violence is not our way, and I shall refrain from further military references.

As you all know, the hook horror — also known over the lands as the vulture beak, hacker, cave dweller, and clacker — makes its abode in dark, isolated areas. The hook horror is found exclusively in subterranean surroundings, with natural cavern complexes and abandoned mines ranking as its most favored lairs. Many of these lairs are linked by the vast subterranean network of tunnels we call the Sunless Realm, where dwell the drow and other vile monstrosities. Though the hook horrors certainly migrate through this kingdom of eternal darkness, we may also speculate that the creature comes above-ground during opportune moments, most especially if the surroundings are a dense forest at nightfall. Yet to date, no specimens have been reported outside underground caverns. Whatever the case, the hook horror rarely associates with creatures other than its own kind.

# The Ecology of the Hook Horror

*The dwellers in the darkness*



Illustration by Jim Holloway

Now, you may wonder how the hook horrors can see, let alone live, down in such dark abodes. Infravision probably comes to your minds. But unlike most other underground dwellers, hook horrors lack infravision completely. The hook horrors are born with very weak eyes and can only see a few feet in front of them. They are, if you will pardon the cliché, blind as bats. So how do they get around?

Fortunately for the hook horrors, nature has compensated for their limited sight by giving them excellent auditory and olfactory senses. They can hear many times better than a normal man, and even possess a limited form of echolocation, as is used by bats. Their scent-detection ability rivals that of certain bloodhounds. In other words, these senses enable the hook horrors to “see” at least as well as you or I would see with our eyes.<sup>2</sup> Actually, their senses are even better than that. During a recent experiment, one hook horror successfully sniffed out an invisible mage. Another one detected a silently moving thief that no one else could hear. Among other things, these senses make it very difficult for enemies to surprise the hook horror<sup>3</sup> and make it easy for the hook horror to search out food.

As for their eating habits, the hook horrors are herbivores. Their diet is rather selective, consisting primarily of subterranean fungi. They have an abrasive tongue to help their feeding, and they commonly eat whatever lichens, moss, and mushrooms they can find. Hook horrors are very large creatures, and therefore (we initially assumed) eat vast quantities of food each day. But there is only so much fungus in any underground area; a hook horror’s food supply, as you no doubt guessed, becomes easily depleted. How does a 9'-tall biped sustain itself over prolonged periods of time?

Direct observation of the hook horror by means of scrying reveals it to be very sluggish — much like the giant sloths I lectured about three seasons ago. A hook horror sleeps roughly half the day and moves about little if not disturbed. Hence, it needs little food to keep it going. Its actual food consumption is shockingly low for a creature its size. A full-grown hook horror consumes roughly three-fourths the amount of food necessary to feed a full-grown man.

Despite this, a hook horror’s food supply can still dwindle rapidly. Most hook horrors migrate from cavern to cavern every few months to obtain a fresh food supply from new lairs while fungi regrow in the vacated areas. A few hook horrors have advanced intellectually to the point that they may grow and cultivate fungus within their lairs. These hook horrors usually have at least one garden chamber devoted to this “farming” activity.

If the usual foods cannot be found, the hook horror will turn to other sources, lest it starve. More exotic creatures, such as zygomys, violet fungi, phycomids, and

shriekers<sup>4</sup> become the hook horror’s daily meal. This may strike you as odd, for common knowledge has it that these fungi are deadly to humans and other creatures. But several reliable accounts have emerged of hook horrors eating these queer plants. Apparently, hook horrors are immune to these plants’ powers.

Continuous study of these immunities has led me to suspect that this ability originates from the hook horror’s endocrine system. This system contains a gland, located here in the abdomen, that secretes a special hormone. This chemical somehow makes the creature immune to the effects of zygom glue, violet fungi rot, and phycomid infestation. My colleagues and I believe that this gland is 100% effective and have taken extra steps to examine it. Our hope is to tap this glands potential and manufacture a protection against the so-called “fatal fungi.” I’m sure you all realize the benefits that such a protection would give toward our study of that botanical area. Our best alchemists and wizards have made attempts to exploit the gland, though these have unfortunately ended in failure.<sup>5</sup> Though we are still working with this project, future success appears uncertain.

The hook horror may be immune to harmful fungi, but it also has an uncanny weakness in health. Tests have shown the hook horror to be unusually susceptible to diseases and parasitic infestations from sources other than fungi,<sup>6</sup> which are usually caught early in life and take a toll over the years. The specimen you see here died of tapeworm parasites. Between disease and the continuous problems of food availability, the hook horror rarely lives past the age of 40.

Hook horrors have very few natural enemies. Because of their infestations and great strength, most carnivores shun them. Only certain indiscriminate predators such as carrion crawlers are bold enough to challenge them. Of course, many hook horrors have been killed while attempting to find food — some by the hazards of underground life, and some by frightened or sword-happy adventurers who are fond of killing all in their path.

The hook horror is one of the few bipeds that reproduces through egg-laying, just as kobolds are known to do. Once every year, a female hook horror lays from one to four eggs in the lair, each about 3" in diameter. They are shaped and colored in mimicry of stones — a disguise against predators — and scattered across the hook horror’s lair among ordinary rocks.<sup>7</sup> This camouflage is very effective, and most every egg laid will hatch after a six-month period.

The hook horror grows very quickly during its early years. Born a mere 1' in height, this creature doubles its size after three months and reaches 5' of height within one year. The hook horror’s growth levels off afterward, with a height of 6' reached during the next year. It then

grows another 1-2' over the next five years. The hook horror reaches its full growth of 9' by its 17th birthday.

The young hook horror becomes highly independent during its early years. It remains with its parents for only about one year. Its second year is one of transition, wherein the hook horror begins to set off on its own without straying too far from its home. By its third year of life, the hook horror is out on its own and is totally independent of its parents. The hook horror attains reproductive ability in its sixth year of life. At this point, it searches out a mate.

Like those of the arthropods it resembles, the hook horror’s hard shell does not grow with it. Thus, it must periodically molt. The molting process starts out gradually. Old plates begin to flake off in pieces, a process that accelerates over a two-day period with bigger and bigger plates falling off, until the hook horror’s entire exoskeleton is shed. Little conscious effort is used in this shedding; the shell simply falls off like an old scab.

Before the old shell falls off, a new exoskeleton has already begun to form. These new plates are just hard enough to support the hook horror’s body and allow for adequate movement. This new exoskeleton is much softer than the old plates, however — not developed enough to serve as full-strength armor — and it offers very little protection to the creature. The hook horror’s exoskeleton hardens relatively quickly and achieves its full strength after a couple of days. Until then, the hook horror is quite vulnerable to physical attack.<sup>8</sup>

Frequent references have likened hook horrors to humanoids. This is only in the loosest sense, however. Hook horrors are not mammalian, being invertebrate arthropods with a vaguely humanoid form. The behavior of a hook horror differs much from that of a humanoid, too; the creature relies on its instincts, very much like an animal does. For instance, the hook horror is afraid of fire and loud noises. It is not aggressive by nature, though like any animal, it will fight furiously if attacked.

Despite their animalistic intelligence, these monsters are capable of limited communication between each other. Just how much can be communicated, my colleagues and I have been unable to measure, but it is my guess that they convey only the most rudimentary knowledge.<sup>9</sup> They don’t speak like you or I — no, the hook horror “talks” by making clacking noises, an action performed by flexing certain portions of its exoskeleton.

At first impression, these noises appear to be nothing more than bothersome gibberish; but repeated listenings show a definite pattern in these sounds. To the hook horror, these noises mean many different things, depending on the sounds’ tone and pitch. The location of food, for example, excites the creature, causing it to emit a steady, high-pitched clacking. The

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location of an enemy, however, angers or alarms the creature, causing it to send low-pitched, unsteady noises. And, most importantly for us, signals of "friendship" are communicated in soft, steady tones. A language specialist is currently working to translate the hook horror's speech patterns; I will of course inform you on his progress.

The hook horror prefers the company of small groups, usually no greater than a dozen or so members. These tribes, if you will, do not go out of their way to associate with other subterranean creatures or even with other hook horrors, though hook horrors have been known to form huge "herds" at rare moments, and others have been briefly befriended by humans with gifts of food. However, the hook horror is more of an animal than a rational creature, and it has not yet been truly domesticated. Proper training and rewarding can — and have — brought hook horrors into short service as guards and sentries, but this is a risky business. The hook horror is a primitive creature and has no loyalty or causes to concern it. Past experience with trained hook horrors showed that they follow simple orders, assuming that owners have ways of communicating effectively with them, for proper treatment. But if a situation becomes threatening, hook horrors ignore orders and put self-preservation above all

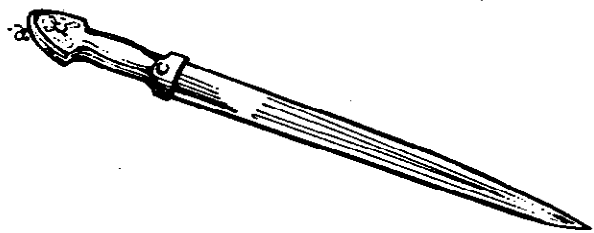
else; a fitting reward for those, I might interject, who exploit the hook horror for making war.

A final note on a curious habit of the hook horror, much reported by adventurers in the Sunless Realms: Hook horrors take some pains to collect silver and electrum when such can be found. Why? Hook horrors eat such coins, which then grind up food in their stomachs much as pebbles in the stomachs of toothless fowl. Silver and electrum do not irritate the stomach linings of the hook horrors, and after passing through their digestive systems — no worse for the wear — are deposited in an area near the current lair of the hook-horror tribe. Adventurers have commented on the peculiar, sour odor of such coins, though this has hardly stopped the collection of the same!

And that, my friends, is a summation of the knowledge on the hook horror. Research continues, and new developments are making the study of the hook horror less a mystery. I am eager to inform you of further developments as they come along. Thank you.

#### Notes

1. To create this armor, a blacksmith or armorer must remove the shell from the hook horror's body. Success is automatic, but if any other person attempts it, the chance of success is only 10% per his



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# Dungeon

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## Hook Horror Statistics (by age)

Age	AC	Move	HD	Damage*	Size
0-3 months	9	3"	½	Nil	1'
3-6 months	8	4"	1-1	1/1	2'
6-12 months	7	6"	1	1-2/1-2	3½'
1-5 years	6	7"	1+1 to 2+2**	1-4/1-4	5'
5-10 years	5	8"	3	1-6/1-6	6'
10-17 years	4	9"	4	1-6/1-6	7½'
17 + years	3	9"	5	1-8/1-8	9'

\* From two claw attacks (see the appendix for information on biting attacks).

\*\* 1 + 1 HD from 1-2 years, 2 HD from 2-3 years, and 2 + 2 HD from 3-5 years.

experience level. This removal is assumed to take one day. Afterward, it takes 30 days for the exoskeleton to be processed into a suit of armor. This armor is AC 3, making its saving throws as bone. Most smiths will buy these exoskeletons for about 100 gp (if still on the body) or 250 gp (if removed). A fully processed suit of armor will sell for about 450 gp. Because hook horrors are 9' tall, these armor suits are only usable by large creatures (i.e., ogres, large bugbears, verbeeg, etc.).

Note that only the exoskeleton of a full-grown, 5-HD hook horror may be manufactured into a suit of armor. The exoskeleton from a younger hook horror is too soft and weak to be crafted into any armor of worthwhile quality.

2. Because of the hook horror's altered senses, it has saving-throw modifications against certain attacks. Against spells causing blindness (i.e., *light*, *darkness*, *color spray*, *cause blindness*, and *glyph of blindness*), the hook horror receives a +2 saving throw, as its vision is not much used. This bonus is also given against illusions and phantasms that affect only the visual senses. If the hook horror is blinded but wishes to enter combat, it has a penalty of -2 to hit (whereas a normal person would have a -4 to hit). However, against spells that affect the olfactory or auditory senses (i.e., *audible glamor* and high-level phantasms), the hook horror has a -2 saving throw, as its major senses are being affected. A blinded hook horror moves at a maximum rate of 6" unless in familiar territory.

Using echolocation (emitting a high-pitched trill which is picked up by its batlike ears), a hook horror can sense its environment out to 120' in total darkness, and can detect *invisible* or hidden objects with ease. Anyone trying to silently past a hook horror without using magical *silence* has a -40 penalty to do so, as they hear so well.

3. The FIEND FOLIO® tome states that there is only a 10% chance of surprising a

hook horror.

4. Whenever a hook horror's lair is located (usually a temporary affair like a niche in a tunnel), the DM should allow a 50% chance that one of these fungi is located in the general area. There is a 10% chance that the actual lair contain these fungi, kept for nourishment. If a hook horror is met as a wandering monster, chances are that it is searching for food. Allow a 40% chance that one of these plants is within 200' of the hook horror when the latter is found.

5. Hook horrors are disease and parasite carriers. When encountered, there is a 10% chance that a hook horror has a disease, and another 10% chance that it has 2-5 diseases. The DM must take this into account when determining whether or not the character has caught a disease (as detailed on page 13 of the DMG). A hook horror has a +2% chance of catching a random disease or parasitic infestation. Against magical disease attacks (e.g., *cause disease*), it has a -1 saving throw.

6. Ferba's hypothesis is more or less correct: Once a hook horror dies, the gland stops producing this chemical. For game purposes, nothing short of a *wish* will allow PCs to exploit this chemical.

7. When a hook horror lair is discovered, there is a 25% chance that it contains 1-4 eggs, disguised as rocks; only close inspection reveals that they are eggs. Such a lair also contains at least two mated hook horrors.

A hook-horror egg takes six months to hatch, at which time the 1'-tall creature has the following statistics: AC 9; MV 3"; HD ½; #AT nil; AL N. The hook horror remains like this for three months. Afterward, the creature grows in a fairly rapid progression, with subsequent age category beginning with a molting period, as explained in note 8. See the table for details.

8. The hook horror sheds its exoskeleton each time it enters a new age category, as shown in the Hook Horror Statistics table.

Once the shell has been removed, the creature is hampered in movement and quite vulnerable to attack. Newly molted hook horrors have temporary penalties of -2 to armor class and -2" to movement rate, and a strong tendency to flee trouble when possible. The new exoskeleton hardens quickly, and the hook horror gains a +1 bonus on armor class and movement for every 12 hours that pass, until the new levels appropriate to its age are reached. Newly hatched hook horrors don't molt immediately after hatching, but are extremely vulnerable anyway and must be protected. Mortality rates for most young hook horrors are high.

9. An ESP spell or *telepathy* power gives the user a basic understanding of the hook horror's thoughts, though these only offer the most rudimentary information (usually about food or personal discomfort), and the creature understands only the simplest of data. Hook horrors have a listing of "low" intelligence because they have excellent retention of information, and learn to cope with their environment and neighbors quickly.

Due to the nature of the hook horror's language (only a hook horror can clack; a human's speech originates from his vocal cords), conventional translation spells such as *tongues* and *comprehend languages* will not decipher a hook horror's dialect. The best way to achieve a rudimentary understanding of the hook horror's language is to observe the creature over a long period of time (i.e., PCs won't be able to figure it out). The loudness of a hook horror's clacking is roughly the same as that of a man speaking normally.

## Appendix

The hook horror's primary mode of attack is a set of two swordlike talons. Located at the ends of its 4'-long arms, these 1'-long hooks (equal to short swords, backed by 18 strength) are the creature's normal and preferred weapons. The hook horror may also utilize its sharp beak as a secondary weapon, but beak damage is weak, equaling a single claw attack -2 hp (1 hp damage minimum) and with a -2 to hit. A hook horror usually avoids biting, as a damaged beak means the creature's eventual death, as it cannot then eat.

The hook horror is a very sluggish creature by nature and too uncoordinated to successfully direct attacks against three separate opponents. It may try to attack two separate opponents, but it then has a -2 "to hit" penalty on its claws and -4 to hit with its beak. As a result, a double attack is only performed under the most desperate of situations.

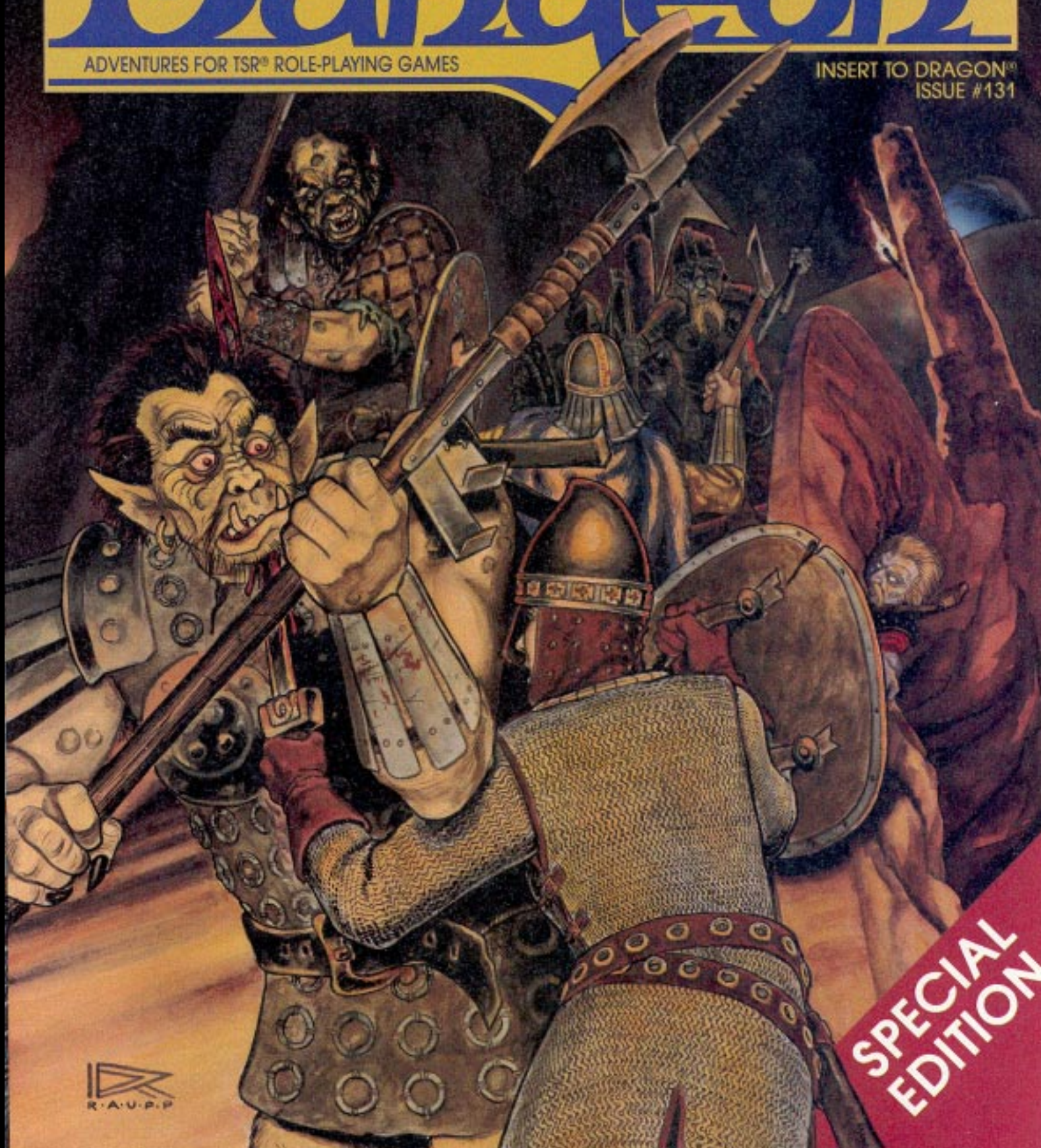
If the hook horror is unable to use its claws (occurring only if its arms are broken or severed), it flees combat, biting with its beak in desperation. If only one arm is out of commission, the hook horror may attack with both its beak and free claw with only a -1 "to hit" penalty on the beak.

THE CHASM BRIDGE — It tolls for thee

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*After graduating from the University of Pennsylvania, Desmond Varady became an officer in the U.S. Army Signal Corps and is currently stationed just outside of London. Although the army keeps him busy, he finds time to read fantasy and science fiction, and to write short stories and fantasy adventure modules. "The Chasm Bridge" is a small part of his underground campaign area — one in which the characters have yet to adventure on the legendary "surface world." This is his first appearance in DUNGEON Adventures.*

This AD&D® game encounter for 3-6 characters of 4-6th level takes place in any part of an underground realm with natural caverns. The scenario can be dropped into a dungeon or used as part of an ongoing underground campaign. It should, however, be placed in an area that will be frequently traveled by the character party (see "Continuing the Adventure"). This area was originally designed to be used in the middle parts of the Deeper Earth, as presented in the *Dungeoneer's Survival Guide* (the DSG). A copy of that book, and of the *Unearthed Arcana* tome, will be useful in running this adventure.

### Adventure Background

Over a year ago, an evil magic-user named Mistle and his adventuring companions arrived at the edge of a vast underground gorge. The party found that there was no way to cross the chasm at this point, so with the help of a few spells and a *wand of earth & stone*, Mistle created the stone bridge still present here. Once Mistle's party was across the chasm, an encounter with a slicer beetle crippled the magic-user — it bit off one of the mage's legs. The party's cleric did what she could, but regenerative spells were not available, and the party wanted to move onward. There were many edible lichens and molds in the area, plus a good source of water, so Mistle decided to stay near the newly made bridge until his associates could come back with magical aid. The adventurers never returned.

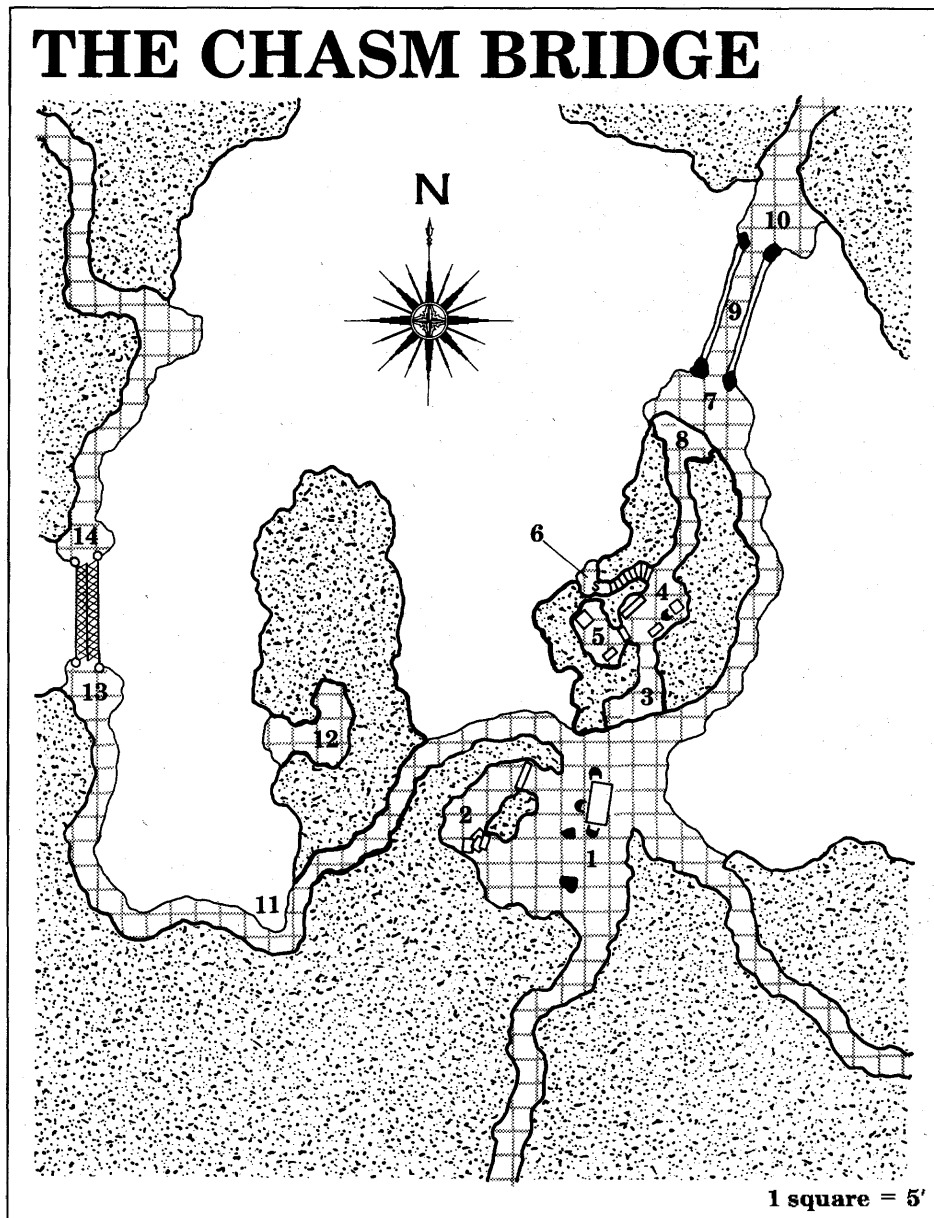
After Mistle realized he might be staying in the area for a while, he decided to make his surroundings a bit more comfortable and built a series of secret caves in a rock formation near the bridge, using his spells and wand. Two balconies allowed him to look out over the bridge area to view passersby without being vulnerable, and also

# THE CHASM BRIDGE

BY DESMOND P. VARADY

The toll may be  
higher than you  
can afford. . . .

Artwork by Roger Raupp  
Cartography by Diesel



provided a defensible position for the crippled magic-user.

In the past year or so, events have changed both the nature of the area and Mistle's own life. About two months after Mistle had settled into his new home, a group of ogres and duergar happened upon the area. Wounded from a recent battle, they collapsed here, thinking it a safe place to rest. Mistle sprung upon them, hoping to kill them quickly and quietly. But the leader of the ogres, Graak by name, managed to talk his way out of certain death for both himself and his companions. Ar-

rangements were made for the monsters to come into the employ of the evil magic-user as bridge guards and toll collectors. All agreed that it would be a most beneficial and rewarding relationship, especially after the group collaborated to destroy the only other nearby crossing of this chasm.

Just two months ago, a group of enterprising svirfneblin opened a tunnel nearby. These gnomes also built a rope-and-wire bridge just a few hundred feet away from the toll crossing, in the same spot once occupied by the bridge that Mistle and his allies destroyed. The

snirfneblin offered this free route to all the underground denizens who didn't want to pay the toll (this underground area is well traveled by many underground races).

The gnomes' good intentions were ruined, however, when a group of margoyles, led by a particularly intelligent leader named Slissh-Ikil, moved into the area, seeing it as a good place to prey upon travelers. Slissh-Ikil had hoped to also take over the bridge controlled by Mistle, but after a fierce and devastating battle with the magic-user and his companions, the margoyle leader decided to be content with his single bridge.

As it stands now, Mistle and Slissh-Ikil have a shaky agreement of sorts. Those who refuse to pay the toll on Mistle's bridge are routinely offered the choice of traversing the margoyles' "free" pathway. The recent addition of a derro named Haltik Wrath to the magician's guards has increased intrigue and suspicion among the denizens of the chasm area. This chaotic dwarf is closely watched by both Mistle and his henchman Graak.

The challenge for PCs is simply to cross the chasm, a relatively straightforward task were it not for the presence of the various denizens and guardians of the area.

### For the Dungeon Master

The PCs can approach this encounter from any direction, but ideally should come from one of the southern passages. A party that moves quietly or sends a scout ahead can hear noise from the ogres' guard post up to 120' away, the ogres being very boisterous and loud.

The chasm is roughly 200' deep, with a large river flowing along its bottom. PCs can negotiate all parts of the encounter area without any risk of falling into the chasm. When moving on the ledges, however, the party is assumed to be traveling in single file. Rules for checking for falls during combat on ledges and bridges can be found on page 30 of the *DSG*. Anyone falling into the chasm must roll his dexterity or less on 1d20 to land in the deepest part of the river and sustain only 2d6 hp damage. Failure indicates the character lands in the shallows and sustains 20d6 hp damage. A PC in the water will be carried 1-4 miles downstream (west) before being deposited on the shore. Check the swimming rules in the *DSG*, page 12-14.

All walls in the chasm area are considered rough, with ledges, and are slightly slippery. Exceptions to this rule are the walls for 20' surrounding all magically created features and caves in areas 3-6 and 8 (including the pathways, Mistle's secret rooms, the sides of the cliffs, and the jutting rock formation in which the secret rooms are found) and the areas within 20' of the stone bridge (area 9). These areas are very smooth and slightly slippery. For thief and nonthief climbing rates and adjustments for these wall conditions, see pages 14-16 of the *DSG*.

Drafts and gusts of wind are frequent in this area of the chasm. Flying characters have a penalty of 3" to air speed and fly at one maneuverability class lower. The margoyles and Mistle have much experience with the winds and therefore receive no penalty.

As travelers frequently come through this area, there is a 15% chance that some other party will be dealing with the toll collectors each time the PCs happen upon the bridge. Prior to playing this encounter, the Dungeon Master can determine whether other travelers are paying a toll and, if necessary, determine the exact composition of the encountered group.

## Encounter Key

Monster statistics follow the numbered section in which their description or appearance is first noted. All monsters in these encounters speak some dialect of either "surface" Common or a sort of underworld trade tongue.

### 1. Guard Post.

Light and sounds tell you that there is something or someone ahead. A cool, steady breeze laden with scents of spiced wine and burning coals brushes your face as you turn a bend in the natural passage. As you approach a cavern of some sort, the light is partially blocked by a huge figure. A rough, broken challenge comes from a grizzled voice: "Whose is its dat goes out dere?"

One ogre watches each southern passage, awaiting travelers. These ogres are not alert and can be surprised on a roll of 1-3 on 1d6, if the surprising character moves quietly and swiftly.

The figure is an ogre, although a rather neat and well-dressed one. Pieces of plate and chain armor are mixed with leather jacks and leggings, both studded and plain. The ogre holds a huge, well-polished halberd. The overwhelming smell of sweat mixed with spiced wine surrounds him like a second coat of armor, and when the huge ogre grins, his smile shows teeth stained yellow and black.

As the ogre steps away from the entrance, you can see fully into the cavern. Straight ahead is a large table, ogre-sized and roughly hewn, with several more of the great humanoids sitting around it, eating and joking. They occasionally dip their bowls into something cooking in a small black cauldron over a large, rusty brazier. To one side of the cavern is a small lighted alcove in which shadows betray the occupants' movements.

Beyond the large table is a huge rock formation jutting out into and flanked by a huge chasm. Torches set in sconces reveal three more features of the rock formation: smooth walls leading up to some sort of natural balcony overlooking both the chasm and the ogre's cavern; two narrow paths running west and north alongside the rock; and, far beyond, a lighted stone bridge crossing the chasm.

Two ogres approach from the rock formation, where they were leaning and sharing a smoke from a huge, gnarled pipe. One of them is a giant humanoid, almost 10' tall, in a shiny breastplate, leather and chain protection for his gigantic arms and legs, and a tremendous black leather belt clasped with a silver skull buckle. This monstrosity carries a 12' black-and-silver trident. His companion is an ordinary ogre similar to the one who initially greeted you.

The huge ogre speaks. "Name's Graak. Youse p'pared to pays th' toll?"

These guardians are the toll collectors, the ogre band that Mistle encountered and eventually hired. After the initial challenge, Graak is the only one who deals with the PCs. Once any dealings have begun, all the ogres return to the table to drink wine, with the exception of the passage guards.

Graak is not very intelligent, but his cunning and sense of self-preservation are much better than others of his species. He rules the guards with an iron fist, but is respected by the other ogres who have come to expect this in a leader. Graak's constant dealings with travelers have made him somewhat courteous for an ogre, and have increased his ability to judge character. Graak thinks Mistle is a good employer, although the ogre occasionally protests the smallness of the cut that the guards receive from the toll money. Mistle has proven himself to be powerful and has saved the ogre band more than once with his magic, so Graak affords the magician much respect and even more distance. Graak's increased judgment of character has made him wary of the new derro guard, Haltik Wrath (see area 7), and the information he has received from the two ogres at that guard point only feeds his suspicions.

Graak is good at collecting tolls from passersby, and therefore has become rather cocky. He expects no less than 25 gp or its equivalent from each individual, but will not explicitly ask for that amount in hopes of getting more (it usually works with travelers new to the area). He tries to evaluate the gold piece value of items but usually defers to the duergar money collectors in the alcove (area 2) for an accurate appraisal.

Blocking one entrance to the alcove are several wooden boxes filled with rocks. The cauldron on the brazier contains hot wine. The table holds a variety of large utensils, carcasses, bowls of food, and pots with remnants of old meals in them.

If the PCs decide to pay the toll, Graak leads them to area 2 so the payment can be secured and safeguarded. He then orders (in ogish) one of the other ogres to take the party to the beginning of the narrow ledge leading to area 7.

If the PCs refuse to pay, Graak tries to avoid combat and offers the following alternative:

As he takes a hesitant step backward, Graak grips his trident and begins again in his halting speech. "Wait jus' a secon'. We guys don't likes the fightin' that much. I ain't gonna argue ov'r a few bits. Jus' take the utter way — bit longer, but I guess it's wort the bits. The Master

jus' won't likes it if you gone on his bridge without us collectin' the toll."

The humanoid turns and starts to walk across the cavern toward the western ledge. He turns his head and looks over his shoulder, waving to you to follow him, keeping an eye out for threatening moves.

If combat occurs, Graak runs toward Area 2 while the other ogres battle the PCs. One of the ogres throws the cauldron of hot wine to cover Graak's retreat. The cauldron is +4 to hit and covers a 6' diameter with a direct hit, causing 1-6 hp damage (save vs. breath weapon to avoid 2-8 rounds of blindness). When thrown by an ogre, the cauldron has a 30' range.

Then Graak or one of the money-collecting duergar in the alcove blows a horn that hangs from the wall in area 2. This warns Mistle and the guards at area 7. All arrive on the scene two melee rounds later.

If the PCs take the alternate route, they think they hear ogres laughing just before they stumble into area 11.

**Graak:** AC 3; MV 9"; HD 7; hp 33; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type +3 (18/75 strength); AL CE; *trident* +2. Graak's silver skull belt buckle is an actual dwarf skull dipped in silver. The whole item is worth 350 gp. Graak also has 14 pp, 31 gp, and 14 gems (worth 10 gp each) in a pouch that hangs from his belt. Graak can tell if someone is lying to him with 70% accuracy, and can make a reasonable guess at someone's alignment after three rounds of conversation and visual examination with 80% accuracy.

**Ogres (7):** AC 5; MV 9"; HD 4 +1; hp 27, 26, 22 (x2), 20, 19 (x 2); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type +2; AL CE; halberds. The ogres have treasure among them amounting to 53 pp, 160 gp, and two gold chains (600 gp and 350 gp).

## 2. The Alcove.

A small lighted alcove here is apparently used by the toll collectors to store their takings and make change. A 4'-high table nearly blocks one entrance to this cave, while the other entrance is blocked by wooden boxes filled with rocks, stacked 7' high.

On the table are an abacus, several sheets of parchment, a few quills,

and an inkwell. Behind the table are a 3'-high bench and a large iron chest, closed and locked. Hanging on the wall above the chest is a brass horn flanked by two sconces holding lit torches.

Two duergar act as the money changers and collectors. Each is dressed in brass chain armor and wears a sheathed hand axe attached to his belt. When conducting toll business, one duergar stays on the bench to make deals while the other stands by the chest in order to secure the monies or make change. The duergar by the chest has a large key hidden beneath his armor, attached to a chain around his neck. The chest is trapped; if opened without the key, it emits poison gas that does 3-36 hp damage to anyone within the alcove (save vs. poison for no damage). The chest contains 5-50 each of copper, silver, electrum, and gold coins; 1-10 platinum coins; and 1-6 each of 10-gp gems and 50-gp gems. There is a 30% chance that 1-4 items of jewelry worth 50-200 (1d4 x 50) gp are also present. Mistle comes down to collect the money every day.

If a battle breaks out, one of the duergar immediately moves toward the horn and blows it if Graak has not come to the alcove. Both draw their hand axes and use psionic *invisibility* for as long as possible, but they will fight fiercely to defend their monies (Mistle might reward them if they survive).

**Duergar (2):** AC 5; MV 6"; HD 1 + 2; hp 9, 8; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA surprise on 3 in 6, psionics; SD save at +4 vs. magical attacks, special immunities (to paralysis, poison, and illusion/phantasm spells), surprised on 1 in 10; see *Monster Manual II*, page 61; AL LE; chain mail, hand axes.

**3. The South Balcony.** This natural and magic-made balcony is 15' above the floor of the ogres' cavern and commands a view of most of area 1 and about 50' north along the narrow ledge that runs toward the stone bridge. The stone of this rock formation is very smooth and slightly slippery, making it very difficult to climb (see "For the Dungeon Master"). The balcony itself has a 4'-high stone wall running along its outer edge.

It is at this location that the PCs might see the Master, Mistle the crippled magic-user. There is a 45% chance

that Mistle is watching the ogres below as they demand a toll from the party. Any PC has an 85% chance to notice him there. If this occurs, read the following:

You notice a gaunt figure looking down from a balcony on the rock formation that juts out into the chasm. The figure is hooded, so it is hard to distinguish any facial details, but it does seem to be leaning on a crutch and wearing some sort of narrow quiver.

If combat with the ogres breaks out while Mistle is watching, or if the magician is called to the balcony by the horn or sounds of battle, he assists the ogres by first casting defensive spells like *transmute rock to mud* and *web*. If the battle is definitely going against the ogres, Mistle uses his *lightning bolt* and *magic missile* spells. He also uses his *wand of earth and stone* (found in the quiver he carries) to block passage along the ledge to his bridge, if the characters try to run that way. The balcony wall provides 75% cover for Mistle; so long as he fights from the balcony, his effective armor class against missile fire is 0.

If Mistle is badly injured (having lost half his hit points), he moves back into his abode, heals himself with his potions (see area 5), and uses his remaining magic to hide or escape. He then tries to annoy and injure the party, using magic and wile, in retribution for their ruining his profitable business.

**Mistle:** AC 7; MV 3" (missing one leg); MU9; hp 28; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; S 13, I 16, W 9, D 16 (6 if moving or dodging), C 13, Ch 16; AL NE; *dagger* +2, *bracers of defense* AC 6, *wand of earth and stone* (36 charges), *wand of paralyzation* (9 charges). The *wand of earth and stone* is of the variety that has the "transmute" spells (see *Unearthed Arcana*, page 96). This particular wand has the spell *stone shape* in place of the *move earth* attribute. The charge cost of this new spell is the same as the one it replaced (two charges per use). The wand's command words are (in order of its powers): "shovel," "go," "up and there," "harden," and "muck." They can be found on a small silver charm (jewelry value 75 gp) that Mistle wears on a chain around his neck. The activating command for the *wand of paralyzation* is "Stop, thief!" This is not written

anywhere. Both wands are kept in a small quiver that Mistle wears at all times.

Mistle's dexterity for the purpose of combat is 6 because of his missing leg. His effective combat armor class with the *bracers* is therefore 7. His available spells are as follows: *feather fall*, *comprehend languages*, *jump*, *magic missile* (x 2), *detect invisibility*, *invisibility*, *web*, *lightning bolt*, *slow*, *tongues*, *charm monster*, *dimension door*, *transmute rock to mud*. His traveling spell books contain the following spells in addition to those listed above: *detect magic*, *identify*, *knock*, *wizard lock*, *dispel magic*, *fly protection from normal missiles*, *cone of cold*.

Though vengeful, embittered, and having an uncomfortable interest in gaining power over evil creatures, Mistle also has a strong wit and is an engaging conversationalist. He has many stories about the underworld lands, and possesses a remarkable speaking voice and aura of authority. He finds talkative, good-aligned characters to be bores but tolerates anyone who does not dispute his personal domain in this area.

#### 4. Laboratory and Living Area.

The black-brown walls of this cave clearly show the telltale smoothness of magical digging. The darkness of the walls makes the place seem dim by absorbing much of the light coming from a small candelabrum and two torches.

The room is well-furnished, and all of the pieces show signs of modest elegance. Along the western wall is a 12'-long stone table covered with various stone implements: jars, beakers, bottles with stoppers, dishes, and a mortar and pestle. Underneath this long table is a shelf running its full length. On it are five larger stone jars, all topped with stone lids.

Along the eastern wall are a wooden table and chair, a stone shelf attached to the wall, and a smaller stone table about 3' across. On the wooden table are various pieces of dirty stone flatware, plates, and cups. The shelf holds two large stone bowls and a single stoppered stone jar. On the stone table are a book, a glass bottle filled with liquid, a good amount of parchment, and a quill and ink bottle. A small, unlit, black brazier sits just to the south of the

stone table. A bit of color comes to the room from a large, tattered rug on the floor and a small tapestry hanging from two stone pegs on the southeast wall.

There are four exits from this room: a stairway leading down to the west, two narrow passages leading north and south, and a stone door leading southwest. The stone door has four doorknobs.

All of the stone items were made by Mistle with the *stone shape* power of his wand. The containers on the large stone table contain various ordinary and extraordinary items for use in casting magical spells: black bird feathers, cave insect hind legs, soot, salt, talc, powdered silver, gum arabic, spider webs, animal fur, bits of turtle shell, molasses, soft black clay, and water. (These are the material components for most of Mistle's available spells). Of the five larger jars under the table, two are empty, one contains water, and two contain blood (ogre and duergar).

The bowls on the shelf in the eastern wall contain lichen and small cave mushrooms. The large jar on that same shelf holds water. The glass bottle on the stone table is a potion of *sweet water* (five doses) that Mistle uses to ensure a good supply of drinkable water. The parchments have general writings and some notes on the behavior of duergar, ogres, and margoyle, but one sheet is a magic-user scroll inscribed with a *mending* spell. The book is an empty magic-user's traveling spell book. The tapestry and rug are worthless. The brazier is filled with soot and the remains of some burnt charcoal.

This room and the one to the southwest (area 5) give good indication of Mistle's taste for both austerity and comfort. The past year in his new home has not made Mistle unhappy. On the contrary, he has found his life underground lacking very little. Caravans and other underground merchants pass over the toll bridge often enough to keep the ogres' stomachs full of wine and all of Mistle's personal tastes well satisfied. The toll money is spent on items ranging from wooden furnishings (a luxury underground) to foodstuffs, spices, and coal.

The door to the southwest was built by the duergar and contains some traps of their own making. The four doorknobs are set vertically into the center

of the 7'-high door. The top knob is false but has a 30% chance to accidentally trigger one of the other two traps. The second knob down is the real one, opening the door through a system of weights and a counterbalance. The third knob releases a trap that drops large rocks onto a 10' x 10' area in front of the door. Anyone in that area takes 4-16 hp damage (save vs. petrification for half damage). The bottom knob releases the pins that hold the door in place, causing it to fall forward (70% chance) or backward (30% chance). If it falls forward, all those within 6' of the door must save vs. petrification at +3 or be crushed for 5-50 hp damage. A combined score of 40 strength points is needed to lift the door off pinned PCs.

#### 5. Bed Chamber.

Smaller than the outer cave, this room is more sparsely furnished, having only four pieces of stone furniture: a bed with a mattress of lichen in burlap sacks, a simple block of stone for a nightstand, a table with shelves, and a high-backed chair softened by three threadbare pillows. The table and shelves hold a collection of knick-knacks.

The 17 knick-knacks are various non-magical figurines of humans, elves, and animals, as well as some stone jars and vases (worth 4-40 sp each). In the bottom of one of the vases, under 2" of murky water, is a *ring of clumsiness* that appears to be a *ring of jumping*. The vase must be turned upside-down for this item to be noticed.

Underneath the bed is a loose stone set flush with the floor. A normal search of the room will reveal its presence. In a hole under the stone are Mistle's revenues from the tolls: 455 sp in a burlap bag, 230 gp and 55 pp in another bag, and a small unlocked coffer containing 11 gems (50 gp (x 4), 200 gp (x 3), and 500 gp).

The nightstand is another duergar work of genius. Inside is a secret compartment containing three potions of *healing* and a magic-user scroll of *fly*, *wall of iron*, and *invisible stalker*. The secret-compartment can be opened by sharply hitting the left side of the nightstand three times.

If Mistle has been injured in combat with the PCs, he retreats to this room and uses the potions of *healing* from his

nightstand. He hides here *invisibly*, waiting for the characters to get the full effects of his trapped door. The magic-user then sneaks out and uses the scroll spells to trap the PCs in his room with an invisible stalker. Finally, he flies away down the chasm, looking for better prospects, taking his spell books (from area 6) with him.

**6. Stairway, Ledge, and Secret Entrance.** This is Mistle's front door and porch. Though he rarely leaves, when he does he enters and exits his abode through the use of a *fly* spell. The PCs can approach this area either from area 4 or by flying or climbing to the ledge. The walls on this rock formation are slightly slippery and very smooth.

The ledge is roughly 6' wide and is supported by the surrounding rock. This outcropping can hold up to 500 lbs. of weight. The wall behind the ledge appears to be smooth and featureless. The secret door can be found by a dwarf 20% of the time, by an elf 15% of the time, and by any other character 5% of the time. The secret door is opened by pressing a small knob of rock underneath the northeasternmost edge of the ledge. The door slides straight down, a lip on the inside catching the door from falling further. To replace the door, the lip must be pulled up past a catch on the inner right side of the doorway.

Rapping hard on the second step from the top of the staircase reveals a secret compartment similar to that in the nightstand in area 5. Here can be found Mistle's traveling spell books containing all the spells mentioned in area 3. These books are not here if Mistle has already left the area.

**7. Approach to the Bridge.** The description below assumes the party is approaching from the south. See area 10 for the northern approach perspective.

As you make your way along the narrow pathway leading to the bridge, you hear a mixture of strange voices and languages but cannot yet see anyone ahead. Rounding the final bend in the ledge pathway brings you face to face with quite a motley crew of humanoids: two large ogres, dressed similarly to those previously encountered but unarmed, four duergar in plate armor, wielding short spears and war hammers; and

a crazed-looking, hairy, dwarflike personage in ragged studded leather armor who holds a huge crossbow of some type.

A roll for surprise should be made here, especially if the PCs gave Graak and his gang any trouble. The two ogres have no reservations about roughing up a few surprised humans or demi-humans, especially since they are far enough away from the influence of Graak. The malicious manners of the duergar and derro only support such bullying and "fun." The shorter-statured humanoids might encourage combat just to get some treasure, if the odds seem reasonable.

The derro, a recent addition to Mistle's guards, has been nothing but trouble for both Graak and the Master. Haltik Wrath has received the support of the duergar guards and, especially since finding out about the unfair cut the guards get from the toll revenues, he has been concentrating on subverting both leaders' power bases. Recently, the derro sneaked away to negotiate with Slissh-Ikil, who presented Haltik with a potion as a pledge of his support. Details of combat plans or other cooperation have not as yet been worked out, though. Any combat in this area, however, is sure to draw Slissh-Ikil's interest, if not the margoyles' presence.

A battle in this area might provide the opportunity that the derro and his supporters have been looking for. Haltik knows that one of the duergar has a magical spear, and he feels that the unknown potion he was given by Slissh-Ikil (a potion of *fire breath*) could turn the tide. The derro will not use the potion unless he feels it is the right time for rebellion.

**Ogres** (2): AC 5; MV 9"; HD 4 + 1; hp 24, 23; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10; AL CE.

**Duergar** (4): AC 2; MV 6"; HD 2 + 2; hp 16, 15, 12, 11; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA surprise on 3 in 6, psionics; SD save at +4 vs. magical attacks; special immunities (to paralysis, poison, and illusion/phantasm spells), surprise on 1 in 10; see *Monster Manual II*; AL LE; plate mail, shield, hammer, spear (16-hp duergar has a *spear* +1).

**Haltik Wrath**, derro: AC 3; MV 9"; HD 3; hp 21; #AT 1 or 2; Dmg by weapon type; D 18; SD 30% magic resistance; AL CE; studded leather armor, derro repeating light crossbow (Dmg

1-3) with poison on the quarrels (2-12 hp damage), short sword, potion of *fire breath*.

**8. North Balcony.** This balcony is very similar to area 3. It commands a view of the stone bridge and about 90% of the chasm area to the north, west and east. The chances of seeing Mistle here are much less, however, unless some sort of battle has begun. There is only a 15% chance that he will be here to see normal passing of the character party.

If, however, the alarm is sounded here, it takes Mistle two melee rounds to respond. His actions upon arriving are similar to those taken for a battle at area 1 — defensive spells first, switching to offensive spells if the battle gets heated, and using his wands only if his business or his life is in jeopardy.

## 9. The Bridge.

The bridge, the main feature of this chasm area, is a unique magical formation. Apparently, two natural ledges were altered and extended from either side of the chasm to create this bridge from the living rock. The bridge is narrow, only about 7' wide throughout its length. Two rough stone columns flank the entrance at either end of the bridge. On each stone column, a lit brand smokily burns in a torch sconce. Running along the sides of the bridge are stone railings about 4' high. The stone of the bridge is relatively smooth, although the underside of the bridge appears to be very rough.

If the PCs approach from the north and refuse the verbal challenge of the guards on the south side (see area 10), a physical challenge is made to the characters on the bridge. The ogres, duergar, and derro have experience fighting on the bridge and have a specific plan of attack for such occasions.

First, a final offer is made (by the strongest duergar) to the PCs to pay the toll instead of fighting their way through. If the PCs refuse, the ogres charge across the bridge, attempting to push the adventurers back to the opposite side. Two duergar follow the ogres closely, while the other two run for help. The derro has found a way to safely climb along the rough underside of the bridge; he will try to get beneath the structure before the battle starts. He

has a 65% chance to do this without being noticed. He then attempts to surprise attackers either on the bridge or near its northern entrance. If his movements have been noticed, his chance to surprise is 1-3 on 1d6; otherwise, he surprises on 1-5. The derro can carry his weapons when he climbs under the bridge. Mistle and the ogres and duergar from area 1 arrive in two melee rounds if their help is summoned.

### 10. The Northern Ledge.

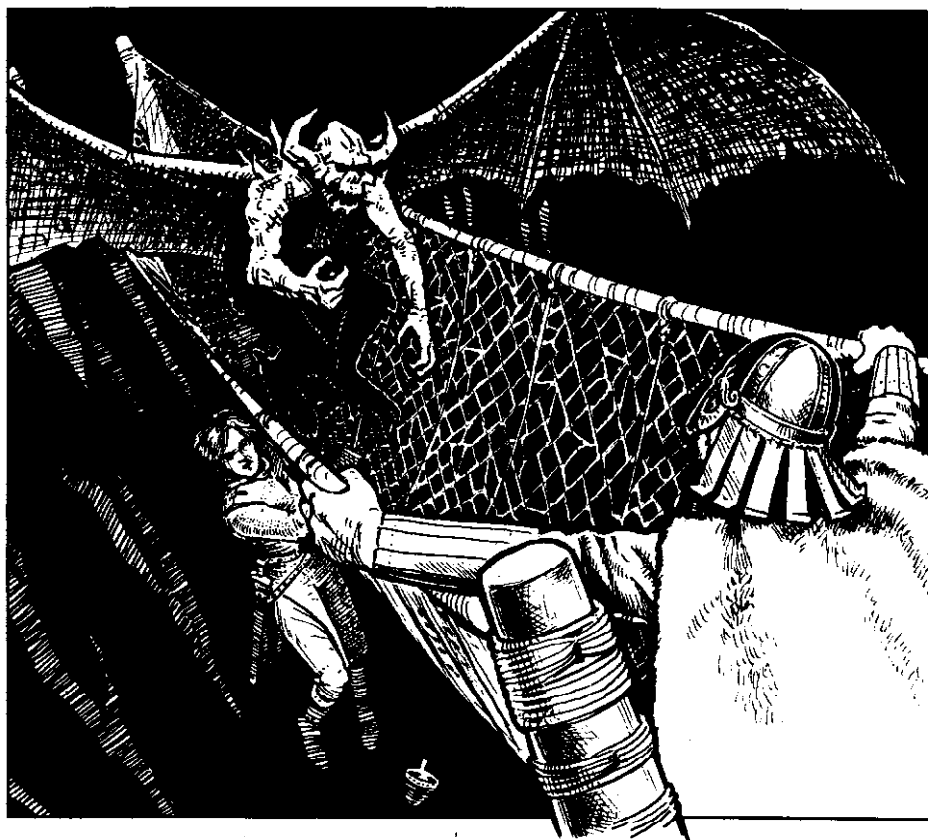
The natural corridor you have been traveling through suddenly opens onto a ledge that provides a panoramic view. To the immediate south and west, the ledge overlooks a deep chasm. In front of you, seemingly formed from the ledge itself, a bridge rises over the chasm and descends to meet a similar ledge on the opposite side. On that opposite ledge stand several guards, their features obscured by the dimness that pervades the chasm. Two larger figures are flanked by four or five smaller ones, and all seem to be holding weapons of some sort. Above the figures is some sort of balcony, carved from the stone of a great outcropping of rock. Rushing water can be heard, far below in the chasm.

One of the shorter guards moves forward and speaks: "This be the bridge of Mistle the Great. Stand where you are and prepare to pay the toll."

Characters who stand fast are met by the two ogres, who cross the bridge from area 7. These guards then escort the party to the narrow pathway leading from area 7 to area 1. The toll-collecting procedure described at area 1 proceeds normally once the party arrives. If the PCs make threatening actions or attempt to cross the bridge unescorted, the guards at area 7 start their combat procedure (see area 9).

### 11. The Margoyles' Alternative.

As you round a bend in the narrow ledge beside the chasm, a rush of air whips past your face. Suddenly, you are set upon by thrashing horns, fangs, and claws, all seemingly made of stone.



Slissh-Ikil hears the PCs moving along the ledge and dispatches two of his cohorts to attack the travelers. Slissh-Ikil himself flies out and stays nearby to see how the youngsters do. If the margoyles take more than one-third of their hit points in damage, they retreat to their lair at area 12 (they lose the ability to fly if below half hit points). Under no circumstances will Slissh-Ikil assist the other margoyles here. Margoyles so badly wounded as to be unable to fly manage to glide down to a ledge far below, just above the river, where they rest until able to fly again.

**Slissh-Ikil:** AC 2; MV 6"/12"; HD 6; hp 40; #AT 4; Dmg 1-6/1-6/2-8/2-8; SA 80% surprise near stone; SD +1 or better weapon to hit; AL CE.

**Margoyles (2):** AC 2; MV 6"/12"; HD 6; hp 32, 26; #AT 4; Dmg 1-6/1-6/2-8/2-8; SA 80% surprise near stone; SD +1 or better weapon to hit; AL CE.

**12. The Margoyles' Lair.** This large and smelly cave can be reached only by flying or climbing. It is 60' above the ledge where the area 11 encounter takes place. When the margoyles are

not attacking local travelers or foraging for food, they are found here 95% of the time. The bare cave contains a large amount of grit, gravel, and sand piled into three mounds. Sifting through the stuff in all the piles reveals some treasure. The two mounds in the southern end of the cave together contain six gems (100 gp (x4), 500 gp, 1,000 gp), 46 gp, 36 sp, and 54 cp. These two piles also contain a good number of shiny but useless baubles. The pile of sand and gravel in the north end of the cave contains a large gold pendant in the shape of a snake (worth 1,200 gp), 78 sp, and a silver short sword with scabbard (worth 60 gp total), as well as an assortment of other worthless shiny items.

### 13. Billygoats' Gruff.

Ahead, at the end of the ledge, you can see a strange bridge. Two smooth stone pillars are sunk into stone ledges on each side of the chasm. Tangles of thick wire and rope are pulled through holes in the pillars and secured by wrapping and tying. Three twisted lines of wire and rope

are stretched across the chasm, each attached to the others by a series of small twists of rope and wire. It appears that the bridge is crossed by walking on the lower of the three ropes while using the other two for handholds. The sound of rushing water can be heard from far below.

Unfortunately, it looks like you have other things to worry about right now. A large, winged, stone creature descends from the darkness of the chasm's ceiling to settle on the nearer of the bridge's foundation ledges.

From this location, Slissh-Ikil makes himself known to the travelers who dare to traverse his pathway and bridge. He presents himself in a menacing manner, either prior to the characters' crossing the bridge from the north or when the party is approximately 20' from the bridge approaching from the south. He avoids combat by flying off the ledge just before the PCs reach him, and maneuvers around to harass characters as they try to cross the rope-and-wire bridge. If they are alive, the other two margoyles join in the fight, using Slissh-Ikil's tactics as described below.

Slissh-Ikil attacks only those PCs who cross the bridge, and only those with little or no armor protection (AC 6 or higher). The margoyle has learned several things from dealing with travelers on a frequent-basis — particularly that the best fighters usually wear large pieces of shiny metal on their bodies. Slissh-Ikil attacks characters when they are approximately halfway across the bridge. He swoops down, slashing with his claws (two attacks for 1-6/1-6 hp damage). A successful attack by the margoyle requires a PC to make two successive dexterity checks on 1d20 to avoid falling off the rope bridge. If only one check fails, the PC hangs onto the bridge by 1-3 of his limbs and can continue to hold on for 1-3 rounds per limb. Failure of both checks indicates that the PC has fallen into the chasm (see "For the Dungeon Master"). Slissh-Ikil concentrates his attacks on characters hanging from the rope bridge, if any.

The bridge, upon closer inspection, is a unique and fine piece of workmanship, completed by the svirfneblin only a few months ago. It is an elegantly simple three-rope suspension bridge.

## 14. The Western Passage.

The natural stone passage you have been traveling in suddenly turns east, and a cool, misty draft blows into your face. A few feet beyond the turn, you break out of the passage onto a ledge overlooking a vast and deep chasm. Through the dimness, you see the faint outline of a bridge about 50' south. The bridge spans the gap between the two ledges, and on the southernmost of these ledges you can see several shadowy figures.

Your choice of movement is fairly limited, however. The rough stone ledge you stand on narrows as it bends south, hugging the western cavern wall. The air is damp, drafty, and cold. The sound of rushing water can be heard in the distance.

As the PCs approach the bridge, they are challenged by Slissh-Ikil (see area 13) and the two younger margoyles. See area 11 for their statistics. There is a 50% chance that PCs entering the area from this point will walk out while one or more of the margoyles is clinging to the rocks nearby in a perfect position to attack the group from surprise.

## Continuing the Adventure

This encounter can be used over and over again as the PCs pass through this area, perhaps on their way to and from the surface or an underground base of operations. The adventurers can easily become involved in the intrigue of the encounter area, taking whichever side they feel inclined to support. Any of the NPCs can become well known to the characters and can be a good source of rumors and information leading to other adventures. The PCs might even strike up a (dangerous) friendship with Mistle, as it has been a long time since the mage has spoken to other people from the surface. Though evil, he is still reasonably honest about his intentions and is fairly charismatic. He may offer the PCs lodging in his humble abode (which is safe, though uncomfortable), perhaps in trade for their tracking down some rare spell component or other required item. The mage might also express an interest in accompanying the party on an expedition to find the associates (or their remains!) who left him here a year ago. Anyone who manages to regenerate Mistle's missing leg has

won his support for the rest of his life, though he will remain in this area.

The unfriendlier denizens of the area can be a source of further adventure as well. The margoyle, Slissh-Ikil, has contacts with other margoyles and many evil creatures up and down the length of the chasm. This evil monster also keeps many important personages in the underworld informed on the comings and goings of travelers through this area. The derro and duergar both have contacts with others of their ilk in the immediate area. The toll-collecting duergar could be skimming money off the top of the revenues, while Haltik Wrath's agreement with the margoyles could become a major problem for Mistle and the chasm bridge guards.

Finally, a coalition of underground merchants and citizens may become fed up with paying the toll and hire the PCs to do away with Mistle and his crew. If successful, the PCs will then have to contend with the margoyles in order to prevent the monsters from taking over the newly liberated bridge for their own purposes.

Ω

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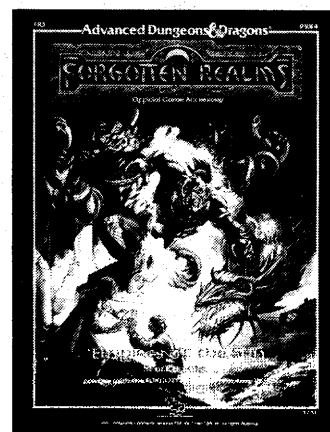
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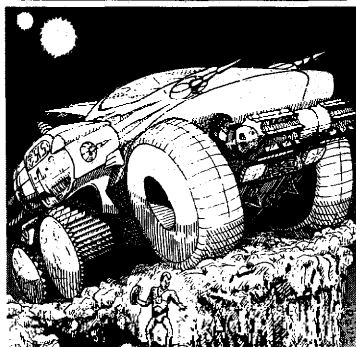
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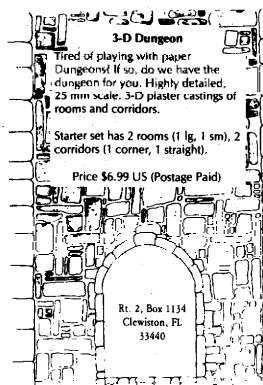
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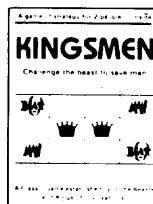
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# SAGE ADVICE

by Skip Williams

If you have any questions on the games produced by TSR, Inc., write to:

Sage Advice  
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This month, "Sage Advice" dispels some monster mysteries that have baffled DMs in AD&D® game campaigns.

## General information

### Will a monster join a character party if invited?

Possibly, if its reaction is favorable and it has something to gain from joining the party. An evil monster might join in order to get an opportunity to turn on a party unexpectedly.

### Is it possible to get a captured monster to change its alignment?

Intelligent monsters might very well "turn a new leaf" if given the opportunity. The change of heart might not last, however. This depends on how well the monster is treated and if its lot is really improved by the alignment change.

### Certain monsters have no listed hit dice, only a fixed number of hit points. How do you figure out their effective hit dice for things like saving throws and combat ability?

Unless the creature's description states otherwise, divide total hit points by 4.5 to get hit dice.

### Where are monsters' psionic abilities explained?

In the *Players Handbook*, starting on page 110, and in the *Dungeon Masters Guide*, starting on page 76.

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## Miscellaneous monsters

### What weapons will work on an ochre jelly?

None. An ochre jelly splits into smaller creatures when struck by weapons.

### How do you determine if a weapon striking a gray ooze corrodes?

Have the weapon roll a save vs. acid (see the *DMG*, page 80).

### The *Monster Manual* says that golems can be hit by magical creatures that have as many as or more hit dice than the golem. What is a magical creature?

This is a limitation on the Creatures Struck Only By Magic Weapons table found on page 75 of the *DMG*. In order to affect a golem, a creature must have an attack equal to a magic weapon of the appropriate bonus and have hit dice equal to or greater than the golem's. For example, a flesh golem is struck only by +1 or better magical weapons. A werewolf, being itself struck only by magical weapons, is the equivalent of a +1 weapon according to the *DMG* table. However, it has only 4 + 3 HD and the golem effectively has 9, so the werewolf cannot harm the golem.

### Is there any way to fight a phase spider without magical aid? Can the victim of a phase spider return the attack even if no one else can?

A phase spider can phase in, attack, and phase out before its opponents can strike if it has the initiative; otherwise, it may be attacked normally. Phase spiders go to the Ethereal plane when they phase out, so ethereal beings can attack them.

### Does a giant or other large monster get strength bonuses?

No, not unless the creature's description says it does. Monsters' strength bonuses are usually subsumed in their damage ranges. For special encounters, you can assign monsters weapon types and damage ranges (*DRAGON* issue #109 contained an article on giants' strength bonuses and weapons), but be sure to alter their experience-point value if you do.

### Most giants can catch missiles; what missiles can they catch?

Giants have a chance to catch boulders hurled by other giants or by siege engines. They cannot catch arrows, ballista bolts, or other compact and streamlined missiles.

### Can humanoid monsters use wands and other magical devices?

No, but witch doctor or shaman types (if allowed for the humanoid race in question) can do so; see page 40 of the *DMG*.

### Can humanoid monsters use weapon specialization?

No; weapon specialization is for the fighter class only. I suppose, however, that some very extraordinary and rare humanoids might actually have fighter training, and so could specialize.

### If a spell-caster eats obliviax containing spell memories, can he exceed his normal spell load? When a character gains spells from the moss, at what level are they cast? Also, the *Monster Manual II* says that failing a save vs. poison after eating the moss will cause a character to become very ill. What are the game effects of this illness?

Spell-casters can exceed their normal memorized-spell maximums and even cast spells from other classes, providing that the save is successful. Any spells gained are cast at the level of the character who lost them to the moss, as decided by the DM. The effects of the illness are up to the DM; I recommend that the afflicted character suffer the loss of 1 hp and one point of constitution per turn. If the character should reach zero hit points, he dies immediately; if his constitution drops below three, he becomes totally incapacitated until the illness passes (see the *Monster Manual II*, page 96). Constitution points are regained at the rate of one point per turn after the illness passes, but the damage remains until cured or regained through rest.

### Do hold or charm person spells work on draconians from the *DRAGONLANCE®* Adventures world of Krynn? Do rangers get giant-class damage bonuses against them?

Draconians are not giant-classed monsters, but they are "persons," and the two spells you mention do affect them.

### How many eggs do dragons lay in a single clutch? How much time passes between the laying of clutches?

This is not difficult to determine from information given on page 30 of the *Mon-*

*ster Manual*. Since any group of two or more dragons is a mated pair with young, the maximum number of eggs in a clutch is the maximum number of dragons appearing, minus two. Since most dragons appear in groups of one to four, most dragons lay one or two eggs. Faerie dragons, which appear in groups of up to six, lay up to four eggs. The minimum number of eggs laid is one. If one assumes that young dragons stay with their parents at least until they reach the subadult stage at 16 years, each clutch must be at least 16 years apart, since dragons would be found in larger groups if they laid eggs while rearing young.

### The mind flayer's main attack is a mind blast. What is this exactly? How often can it be used?

This is identical to the psionic attack mode *psionic blast*. It is usable once per melee round — as long as the user has sufficient psionic strength.

### The *DMG* has a table giving the range of hit points for zero-level humans in various occupations. Is there similar information somewhere on zero-level demi-humans?

There are no zero-level demi-humans except for halflings; refer to the race descriptions in the various monster tomes for information on demi-humans with no character abilities.

### The *Monster Manual* says that gold dragons can polymorph themselves without harm. Explain this.

A gold dragon has effectively unlimited use of *polymorph self* spells, and makes no *system shock survival* rolls in using them.

### The duergar from the *Monster Manual II* is listed with the psionic ability *molecular attraction*. Is there such an ability?

No; this was a typo. The actual discipline is *molecular agitation*.

Ω

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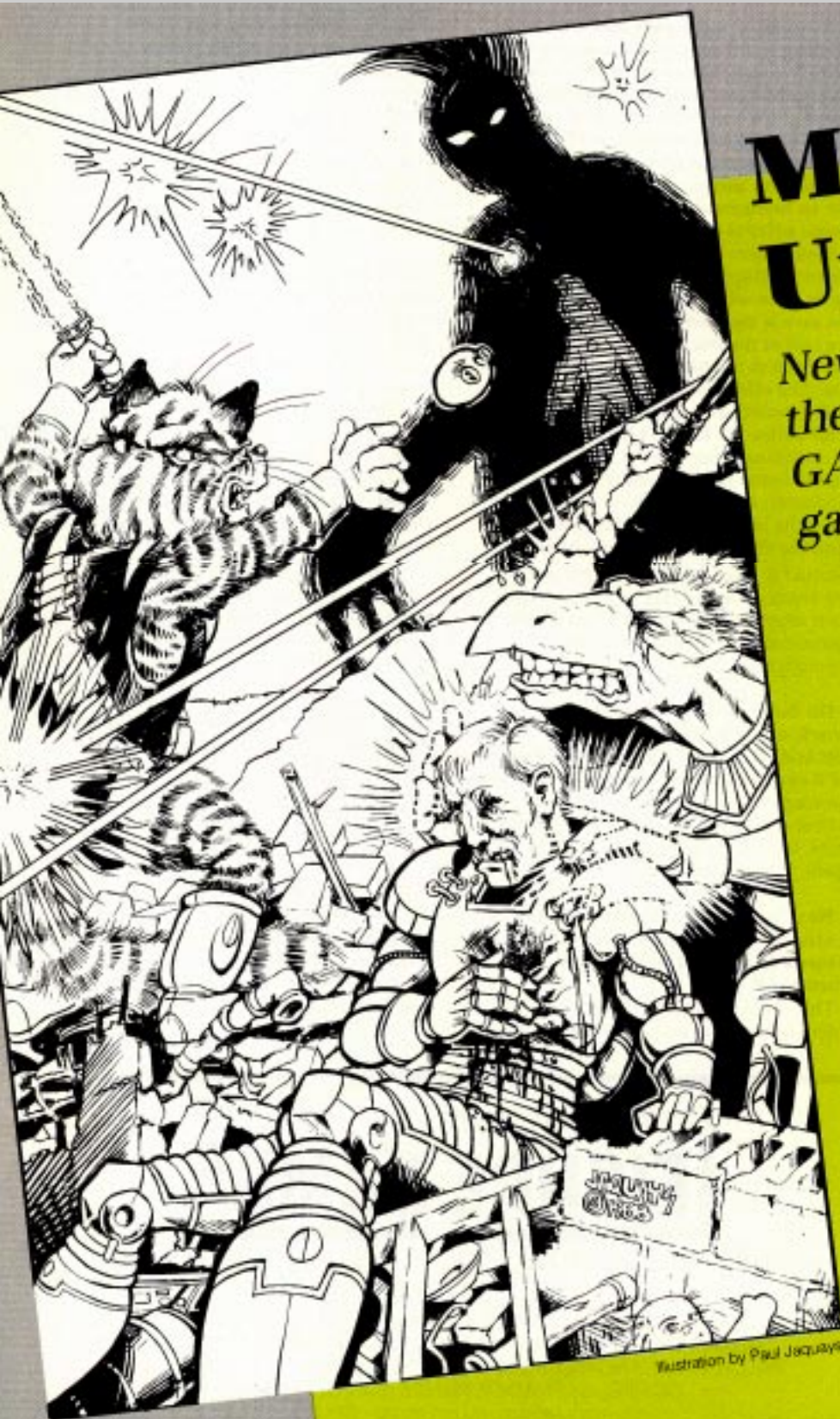
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# Mutations Unlimited

New powers for  
the third-edition  
GAMMA WORLD®  
game

by Kim Eastland

Most GAMMA WORLD® game GMs have it happen to them when they least expect it. A player is generating a new character, or something has further mutated a player character (such as the Alpha Factor Generator in the GW6 *Alpha Factor* module), and the magic number rolls up: 90, New Mutation. Suddenly, the routine of listing the normal mutations is gone, and the GM has to provide a brand-new power for the PC. Fortunately, sources for new mutations abound. Spells from AD&D® game books, superpowers from the MARVEL SUPER HEROES® game, and material from other RPGs are the best places to find inspiration. The GM can also take notes while he is running his campaign when a player says something like, "Boy, I sure wish I could create a light of my own." Most players will be glad to have their PCs receive the power they helped create.

But for all the sources and inspiration, it still takes time to create new mutations. This list of new mutations is for those GMs whose time is tight and who prefer that someone else did the work. These statistics are for the third-edition (1986) game. A range of "Sight" refers to normal sight; a range of "M. Score" means the mutation score is used.

### 270° Sight (S) Physical

**Range:** Sight

**Duration:** Constant

**Modifier:** None

**Use:** Constant

**Number:** Self

**Effect:** New Sense

**Description:** The character has multiple optical sensors around his head, giving him a 270° field of vision. The character adds his mutation score to his surprise roll when in front of a party or when operating on his own. This bonus is never added to the party's surprise check, however. The character can focus in a certain direction, but is still aware of things going on around him beyond the normal range of vision. The mutant checks against his mutation score when attempting to identify something he is not actively examining. Because he is so optically enhanced, however, the subject suffers one additional base point of damage from light attacks.

### 360° Sight (S) Physical

**Range:** Sight

**Duration:** Constant

**Modifier:** None

**Use:** Constant

**Number:** Self

**Effect:** New Sense

**Description:** The character has multiple optical sensors around his head, giving him a 360° field of vision. The character cannot be visually surprised. This bonus is never added to the party's surprise check, however. The GM must roll for the party separately, then determine what the character with this mutation intends to do. The character can focus in a certain direction, but is aware of things going on all around him. He rolls against this mutation score when checking for anyone moving behind him, trying to pick his pocket, or performing similar actions. Because he is so optically enhanced, a mutant with this power suffers double damage from light attacks, and must roll his mutation score or be blinded for 1d10 minutes.

### Dark Creation (C) Physical

**Range:** M. Score

**Duration:** 10 min.

**Modifier:** MS

**Use:** 3 per 24 hours

**Number:** Variable

**Effect:** Darkness

**Description:** This mutation allows a character to emit an area of darkness equal in a radius of meters to his mutation score. This darkness is not of sufficient intensity to harm anyone by itself, but it does block all illumination of an intensity up to that of a glow cube. All other bright lights — including that of floodlights, a *light generation* or *light creation* mutation, etc. — have their intensities reduced by half, which also applies to range, damage, and so on. The user of this mutation cannot see in his own area of darkness. Unless consciously turned off, this darkness exists until the end of the duration set for it, even if the character falls unconscious or dead.

### Energy Healing (C) Physical

**Range:** Touch

**Duration:** Constant

**Modifier:** CN

**Use:** Constant

**Number:** One

**Effect:** Healing

**Description:** The mutant has a power similar to the energy metamorphosis mutation, except that the healing he can perform by the transformation of energy only applies to other creatures, not to himself. After making a successful mutation-score roll to absorb the energy and prepare to transfer it, the healer needs to touch a creature to heal it. The healing energy is immediately transferred, but the mutant must concentrate for one full turn for the transference to be completed. Any organic creature can be healed in this fashion. The amount of hit points healed during any one turn equals the base damage of the absorbed attack, times a mutation-score result-factor roll result -1 RS. The mutant must heal some creature by the end of the turn following the turn in which the attack was taken, or else lose the energy and take half the damage from the attack, no matter what the mutant's normal immunities are.

### Genius Capability — Sociological (S) Mental

**Range:** Body

**Duration:** Constant

**Modifier:** IN

**Use:** Constant

**Number:** Self

**Effect:** Special

**Description:** This mutant's mind is particularly acute when dealing with sociological information (laws, mores, cultural types, etc.). As a result, he adds this mutation score to his Intelligence when using this type of information. Furthermore, he gains the Bargain skill (or gains another such skill level if he already has it), along with a +1 RS in his favor when rolling on the Impress, Pacify, Parley, and Encounter Reaction Charts.

### Light Creation (C) Physical

**Range:** M. Score

**Duration:** 1 hour

**Modifier:** MS

**Use:** 1 per hour

**Number:** Variable

**Effect:** Illuminate

**Description:** The mutant can cause his body to glow, emitting light in a radius equal in meters to this mutation score. This glow is not of sufficient intensity to harm or blind anyone, but does provide illumination equal to that of a glow cube. Once activated, this light glows until the end of its duration (unless the mutant consciously turns the mutation off), even if the character is unconscious or dead. The only drawback to this mutation is that the mutant using this power is often the most obvious party member, and might draw creatures at night as does a campfire.

There is a 1-in-6 chance that a mutant can also use this mutation as a light-flash attack for one turn, once per day. All creatures within the affected radius suffer a mutation attack and must save vs. Dexterity or be blinded for 1 turn per result factor. Those who do save are still stunned for 1 turn.

### Material Transparency (C) Mental

**Range:** Touch

**Duration:** Perm.

**Modifier:** MS

**Use:** 1 per 6 hours

**Number:** Variable

**Effect:** Special

**Description:** The mutant can touch an item or a material and — without changing that material's strength, armor class, etc. — turn it permanently transparent. Living organisms are not affected by this action, although inanimate matter may be by making a special roll. The column on which this action is rolled differs for every type of material. The being must start with Rank 20, then subtract one column for every material strength (ST) rating of the material being altered (stone, being ST 16, shifts 16 columns to the left on column 4). The mutant may then shift the rank upward with his Mental Strength modifier by one column per point of the modifier. The amount of material turned transparent is up to the mutant, with a maximum area of a 30cm square or cube multiplied by the result factor; green indicates 60cm, yellow indicates 90cm, etc. This mutation is best used on items that a party member wishes to see through, like ammunition clips, walls, etc. Successful material transformation makes the material as clear as glass. Failure has no effect.

### Mental Retention (C & S) Mental

**Range:** Body

**Duration:** Constant

**Modifier:** IN

**Use:** Special

**Number:** Self

**Effect:** Retention

**Description:** The mutant can accurately remember any information he hears or sees. (This mutation is only useful if the mutant can read or speak the relevant language; otherwise, he must make a mutation-score roll to remember gibberish or runes he does not comprehend.) This mutation can be invaluable to an adventuring party in a number of ways. For example, if the party is given explicit instructions, as they are in the current GAMMA WORLD game series of modules, this mutant can remember the instructions word for word. He can look at a diagram of an item or creature and be able to recognize it on sight. He adds four skill levels to any Singer, Poet, or Storyteller talent or skill he chooses, as his repertoire becomes vast. If he makes his mutation-score roll, he can also remember cryptic runes and have them interpreted later by someone who might know them.

If the GM feels this mutation might unbalance his campaign, he could have the mutant make a mutation check in order to remember something. A black result indicates mistaken information; white indicates the gist of the information is recalled; other colors indicate more exactness, with red meaning a special insight into the information (given by the GM).

### Molecular Rearrangement (C)

Mental

**Range:** Touch      **Duration:** Constant  
**Modifier:** MS      **Use:** 1 per 6 hours  
**Number:** One      **Effect:** Special

**Description:** The mutant can rearrange the molecules in an inanimate, nonliving item by merely touching it. When making a mutation-score roll, the mutant can alter the size, shape, or basic structure of the item. Thus, the being can change a piece of metal into a basic tool with which he is familiar, a pile of vegetation into edible food, or a branch of wood into a bow. Some restrictions apply; for example, the item or material created must be the same weight as the material with which the mutant began. Materials cannot be changed into other materials, such as metals to wood. Also, any item created must be simple and must be something with which the character is familiar. If the GM wishes to allow more complicated or detailed tools and items to be created, he should assign a greater Difficulty Factor to the mutation-score roll. The maximum amount of weight in kilograms that the mutant can change at any one time is equal to his mutation score. This mutation also allows the being to purify tainted food or water.

### Plasma Spheres (C) Physical

**Range:** Touch      **Duration:** Special  
**Modifier:** CN      **Use:** 1 per 4 hours  
**Number:** One      **Effect:** Special

**Description:** By making his mutation-score roll, the mutant can create a sphere of stable, invisible plasma by merely touching a solid surface. The sphere is only 1cm in diameter, and can only be seen by the mutant producing it and anyone with infravision. The plasma sphere remains wherever the mutant initially places it, whether on a path, on an item, in a doorway, etc. If a person other than the sphere's creator touches the object, it becomes unstable and explodes immediately. The radius of the explosion is one meter, and the base damage equals one-half the mutation score. Untouched plasma spheres fade away into nothingness after 1d6 +6 days.

### Silence Field (C) Physical

**Range:** M Score      **Duration:** Variable  
**Modifier:** CN      **Use:** 2 per 24 hours  
**Number:** Variable      **Effect:** Sonic Dampening

**Description:** The mutant can generate a field of silence around himself that extends in a 2-meter radius centered on the user. He turns the field on by making a mutation-score roll; the field remains in place until the mutant either loses concentration or an hour passes, whichever comes first. The mutant may move around while concentrating on this mutation, although he may never fight. The field completely eliminates all sound that enters it; this includes all sonic attacks. Anyone else in this field during a sonic attack is also exempt from its damage. The PCs are forbidden to talk to anyone within the field, as no sound can be heard at all (including pleas for help made out of the party's sight). A *silence field* grants the user +20 to any surprise roll he makes.

### Sonic Bellow (C) Physical

**Range:** 15m radius      **Duration:** Constant  
**Modifier:** CN      **Use:** 1 per hour  
**Number:** Variable      **Effect:** Sonics

**Description:** The mutant can generate high-frequency sound waves that cause damage to organic and inorganic material in a 15-meter radius. Use the mutation score for the attack rank; the base damage is equal to one-half the mutation score to all organic and inorganic materials under material strength 10.

### Sonic Roar (C) Physical

**Range:** 30 meters      **Duration:** 1 turn  
**Modifier:** CN      **Use:** 1 per 24 hours  
**Number:** Variable      **Effect:** Sonics

**Description:** The mutant can emit extremely high-frequency sound waves once every 24 hours. These waves cause damage to the exposed tissue of everyone in the direction that the mutant releases the roar. The mutant picks the target; everyone within three meters of the target or in a straight line between the mutant and his target also receives damage. The base damage for this attack equals one-half the mutation score plus three points. Inorganic targets gain a -1 RS to the damage suffered.

### Static Field (C) Mental

**Range:** Special      **Duration:** 30 min.  
**Modifier:** MS      **Use:** 2 per 24 hours  
**Number:** Variable      **Effect:** Special

**Description:** The mutant can generate a static field either centering around himself or centering on a place or object up to 30 meters away. On a successful mutation-score roll, the field activates and covers a 30-meter radius. Transmission of broad-

cast beams through that area are jammed until the field disappears because of time duration, the mutant's will, or the mutant being rendered unconscious. Radio, television, communicators, security and surveillance equipment, and similar devices are completely jammed, as are broadcast-power beams which robots and large machinery use. Radar and sonar of all types are also completely blocked. Strangely enough, *telepathy* and *empathy* mutations are also affected, and any mutant using them must make a Mental Strength save or suffer Mental Shock.

### Water Walking: (C) Mental

**Range:** Special      **Duration:** Constant  
**Modifier:** MS      **Use:** Constant  
**Number:** Self      **Effect:** Special

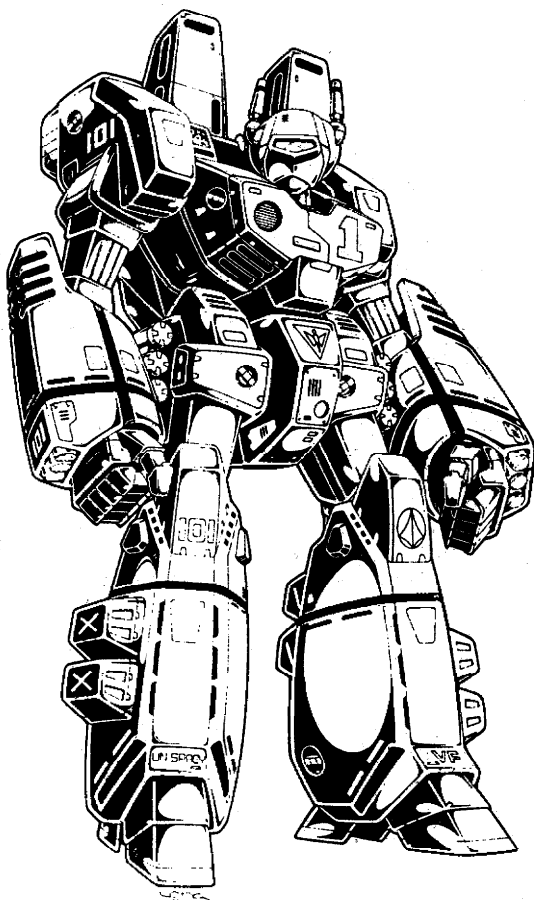
**Description:** The mutant can increase the surface tension of the area beneath his feet (and hands or paws if he is quadrupedal or crawling on all fours) so that buoyancy normally lacking in the surface beneath him suddenly exists, thus allowing him to move across the surface walked upon as if it were packed earth. This allows the mutant to walk across sand, mud, thin ice, and similar surfaces without sinking into them, at his full movement rate. He also can walk across closely packed fields of grain or long grass, or water of intensity A to 6, but at one-half his normal movement rate. If the fluid's conditions are greater than 16 (steady current with 30cm to 60cm waves), the mutant must make a mutation-score roll to remain on his feet every 500 meters he moves, and he only moves at one-quarter his normal movement rate. He can never walk on churning water that is greater than 118.

### Weather Summoning (C) Mental

**Range:** 250 meters      **Duration:** 1 hour  
**Modifier:** IN      **Use:** 1 per 24 hours  
**Number:** Self      **Effect:** Special

**Description:** This mutation is similar to the *weather manipulation* mutation. It allows the mutant to alter the weather by as much as 40°F in an area within a diameter of 250 meters, but does not give him control over how the weather progresses from there. He must make a roll on his mutation score -3 column shifts to change the weather. The mutant cannot control the wind's speed or direction, and has no control over the effects of a storm system. The only control the mutant has is over the temperature. The desired temperature is reached in five minutes, and remains there until either an hour has passed or until another creature uses the *weather summoning* mutation to return it to normal. ☐

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# The Game Wizards

## Special intelligence

by Douglas Niles

The chance to design the TOP SECRET/S.I.<sup>TM</sup> game was a marvelous opportunity, but a mixed blessing. Revise a game that has been around almost as long as the hobby itself, with a significant — if not large — following of devoted gamers, and the potential for trouble becomes real.

Well, I can breathe again. Thanks to all of you who wrote to tell us (Warren Spector, the game's editor and developer, and myself) how much you like the new game. The letters have been running 5 to 1 in favor of the redesign.

An occasional voice of dissent calls for a return to the traditional values of the original TOP SECRET® game. These criticisms can be grouped into two basic categories: those who miss the painstaking attention to detail in the original game, and those who object to our tampering with a "classic."

Indeed, TOP SECRET is about as much of a classic as our industry has to offer. If it's any consolation, we didn't undertake the revision lightly. We considered a partial revision of the rules, a redesign of select

systems, and a "from the ground up" approach — releasing an essentially new game that would (we hoped) appeal to the fans of the original game. You, the players, were willing to give the redesign a chance. As a result, the game is a success, and the majority of gamers (if the mail is any indication) are happy.

The hard-core level of realism inherent in the original TOP SECRET game is something we have not forgotten. However, there is almost a direct correlation between the level of detail presented in a game system and the amount of time needed to resolve a given gaming situation. A game system that is built around only a few game mechanics (such as the TOP SECRET/S.I. game's Attribute Check) can absorb more detail without a great effect upon playability. Therefore, some of the new accessories will include great amounts of detail. Merle Rasmussen's *The G4 File: Guns, Gadgets, and Getaway Gear* is one of these, providing information about a wealth of espionage and adventuring equipment — far more things than could possibly have been covered in the boxed game itself.

Other accessories, such as the *High*

*Stakes Gamble* accessory pack, will introduce more advanced rules for certain game functions. *High Stakes Gamble* greatly expands the vehicle rules for the new game, giving specific damage locations for vehicles, new maneuvers, and procedures for a number of special situations. Boats, aircraft, and motorcycles are differentiated more completely than was possible in the TOP SECRET/S.I. game box.

Our attention now turns to supporting the TOP SECRET/S.I. game, and I think you'll find that we are doing this diligently. One of the problems with the old game was the infrequent publication schedule of support product. We are determined to prevent this problem from affecting TOP SECRET/S.I. games.

But we're not just producing support material! We are talking about alternate campaign possibilities such as 1930s pulp or near-future super-agent adventures. In addition, you will be able to draw upon a wealth of background material for our "official" campaign, pitting the Orion Foundation against the nefarious activities of the Web. We will publish source books detailing the conflicts between these two agencies, as well as settings for Orion Foundation offices and modules.

Neither are we neglecting the real-world aspect of the game. One of our first supplements, the *Covert Operations Source Book* by John Prados (a noted game designer and writer), details the histories of the KGB and CIA, then provides the reader with dozens of authentic case histories involving the rivalry between these two agencies. This book is a must for the player who wants his campaign to reflect the realities of international espionage.

A number of people have sent in the boxed-game membership cards, and the real "Orion Foundation" is growing faster than we anticipated. By the time you read this, those of you who have signed up should have received your first official newsletter. As you'll see, our plans take us into 1990 and beyond. You can rest assured that the TOP SECRET/S.I. game will receive support for years to come!

Ω

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# Role-playing Reviews



*Tickets to the stars*

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Looking for a science-fiction role-playing game? Well, what kind do you want? Science fiction is a vast genre: it has space, the final frontier, high-tech gadgetry, and faster-than-light spaceships — but are you after space opera, hard science fiction, or giant robots blasting each other into slag?

Space opera bears more than a passing resemblance to the ideals of heroic fantasy. Fans of swords and sorcery, where larger-than-life heroes deal with all comers in a suitably heroic fashion, feel right at home here. Just peel off your magic ar-

mor, throw away your +3 sword, and pick up a trusty blaster. Swap laser blasts with the best that the evil galactic empire can throw against you. Zip around the universe in your customized starship in search of adventure and epic battles.

Space opera is a genre where the heroes always escape from the jaws of death, and none of the opposition's megadeath-dealing machines ever seem to hit the good guys. The laws of science are cheerfully plundered to come up with impressive-looking gadgetry. If so-called scientific theory gets in the way of a good adventure, throw it out and come up with some suitably grand alternative.

But maybe you prefer a game where brains are more important than hardware; where everything that happens is based on sound, scientific facts; where the technology, although impressive, seems plausible — i.e., a hard science-fiction game.

Sure, Einstein always seems to be forgotten; you've got to have interstellar travel or else no one ever gets out of the Solar System. But the rest feels realistic, like a future projection of present-day technology with a few imaginative twists thrown in to spice things up. The aliens feel right too. No green, bug-eyed monsters here; aliens have realistic societies and cultures, and proper motivations to boot. They may not be very nice, but they tick in all the right ways.

In the hard science-fiction genre, you surrender if someone points a laser at you. In real life, you wouldn't expect to make a break for it and escape unscathed. The hard science-fiction genre oozes realism. To deal with the problems thrown at you by the uncaring universe, brains are needed more than blasters.

Then again, science-fiction games may conjure up visions of gigantic robots stalking the landscape, armed with such a vast array of lethal weapons that a modern-day armored division is as effective against them as a group of ants against a human. Hardened warriors encased in tons of protective armor stride across alien landscapes, blasting all they see with the impressive array of weapons at their command. This is an age where militarism is the norm, and the way of the warrior has transcended such weapons as swords in favor of huge, metallic constructs.

While closely related to space opera, the giant-robot genre also steals liberally from hard science fiction. The robot warriors are tough and efficient, but so is the opposition. Those robots don't run forever; they must be repaired and maintained. If a critical hit blows the robot to bits, there's a good chance the pilot is going to be smeared halfway across the planet.

## **STAR WARS®: The Roleplaying Game**

Science-fiction role-playing game

West End Games

\$14.95

Design: Greg Costikyan

Editing: Eric Goldberg, Paul Murphy, Bill Slavicek

Art direction: Stephen Crane

"Rebel Breakout" adventure: Curtis Smith

Solo adventure and adventure ideas: Ken Rolston

Who can forget the impact of the opening scenes of the movie *Star Wars*: a starship futilely trying to outrun and outgun a pursuing vessel that made its prey look like a one-man fighter? The pursuer was big — *real big*! It promised action on a big scale. Blasters zapped down the corridor as storm troopers broke their way into the ship. Then *he* appeared — tall, dark, and sinister. Darth Vader was larger than life and utterly ruthless, a megavillain who

made your average fantasy megalomaniac look like a wimp.

The movie moved at a scorching pace as the heroes took on impossible odds and won. TIE fighters screamed across the screen as rebel X-wings desperately attempted to hit the Death Star's vulnerable point. This was classic stuff indeed, and it didn't end there. In *The Empire Strikes Back* and *The Return of the Jedi*, the characters and plot developed until we all knew about the Jedi and the Force, the relationships between the characters, and the depth of George Lucas's vision.

Now, with STAR WARS: The Roleplaying Game, players can experience the thrill of battling the Empire. This game has it all: nifty rules, fast, heroic action, star-spanning conflicts, and lots of fun.

**Background:** Have you seen the movies? Then you already know the background. Bright images fly into the mind from each page of the rules. Characters and scenes from the movies come to life in game terms in a most effective and pleasing manner.

**Presentation:** STAR WARS: The RPG is a 144-page hardbound book, complete with neat color plates. All the essentials are included: character generation, combat systems, skills, space travel, the Force, hardware, game master's tips, and an introductory adventure. Of special note are the advertisements which appear throughout the book, offering a great career in the Imperial Navy or a four-week, grand-galactic tour. Maybe you want hardware: How about a handy R2 astromech droid or a T-65 "X-wing" fighter?

**Character design:** This is simple and fast. There are 24 character types to choose from, each one presented as a template to be customized by the player. The templates cover such diverse characters as smuggler, bounty hunter, failed Jedi, quixotic Jedi, the Kid, the armchair historian, the Wookie, and the Ewok. There are lots of nice stereotypes, and the ambitious can even design a droid to play.

Each character comes with a colorful background, personality, and an in-character quote. There are no problems here; simply grab your character type, read the background, and you're away. If you don't like the background, you can always change it.

This flexibility and color is apparent in the customization process. Each character is defined by six general skill areas, each represented by a number of dice showing how proficient the character is. By spending an additional seven dice, characters can increase specific skills. For example, the Smuggler has a Dexterity of  $3d6 + 1$ . This means that when using any Dexterity-related skill, he rolls  $3d6$  and adds 1 to the score. By spending dice, the player can increase his blaster skill (a Dexterity skill) to  $4d6 + 1$  or  $5d6 + 1$ . This is all very nice, but how does it work?

**Game mechanics:** To find out whether

you can perform an action, you bounce your dice on the table and total the score. This is compared to the difficulty factor of the action — 5 for very easy actions and 30 for nearly impossible actions.

Ever wonder how the heroes in the *Star Wars* movies can climb up a line to an Imperial AT-AT walker, slice the hatch open, toss in a grenade, then scoot back down in one fluid motion? Or why the Imperial storm troopers can hit everything but those heroes? Most game systems can't handle these maneuvers. Characters are usually restricted to one action, or are expected to spend and keep track of action points in the process, interrupting the flow of the game. How can the heroes get around in STAR WARS: The RPG?

The answer is simple: The heroes are *heroes*, and heroes can do the truly heroic. The game system reflects this level of action neatly and convincingly; a character can carry out any number of actions a round. The only restriction is the number of dice available for the skills. The first action is carried out using the stated number of dice for the skill; the second action uses one fewer die; the third action uses two fewer dice, and so on. Sooner or later, you'll run out of dice and actions.

And if somebody shoots at you, you dodge. Roll your dodge skill and add it to the difficulty factor of the firer. This costs you one die from your next action, but it sure beats being blasted. What could be simpler?

Fast action without cumbersome calculations means the game moves at the pace of the movies. This system covers everything in the game, whether it's a shootout in the space port, zapping the Death Star with your X-wing, or programming a computer.

During adventures, characters earn skill points that are spent to improve skills. The number of dice currently rolled for the skill equals the number of skill points required for an improvement. To take your blaster from  $5d6 + 2$  to  $6d6$  costs 5 points. The higher the skill, the more you have to pay. Given time, you can end up with a very fast-moving, fast-acting, and truly impressive character (without the complicated book-work offered by other systems).

Of course, there's the Force. Every character starts with one Force point, and this can be spent to double the dice rating of all skills for one round (for example, raising a blaster rating from  $5d6$  to  $10d6$  and a dodge rating from  $3d6$  to  $6d6$ ). Force Points can be used for good or evil purposes, or to simply save your hide. Using the Force for evil earns a Dark Side point. This is bad news; too many of these and you go over to the Dark Side, becoming an NPC under the control of the game master (GM). On the other hand, using the Force in a heroic and dramatic way may earn you an extra Force point at the end of the adventure.

Jedi and other students of the Force have a wide range of Force powers. These

are rated similarly to skills and function in the same manner. With these powers, it's possible to read minds, resist extremes of temperature, absorb incoming blaster bolts, and generally act like a Jedi or Darth Vader. However, you've got to be good, or else you slip over to the Dark Side.

**GM's tips:** STAR WARS: The RPG excels in providing GMs with suggestions on how to get the best out of the game. After reading this book, GMs should be able to present colorful and fast-moving adventures. Whether it's speaking in character, making funny noises, setting the scene, pacing the adventure, or simply handling the mechanics, it's all there. Lots of staging tips are given, and sample dialogues provide colorful examples of play.

The GM is encouraged to improvise in situations not covered by the rules and to shamelessly fudge the game's mechanics for dramatic effect. The emphasis is on keeping the action moving, not on getting bogged down in rules discussions. If the rules are about to ruin the adventure, ignore or alter them to keep the action flowing. The message is to have fun, and you are clearly shown how to do it.

**Introductory adventure:** A short solo adventure teaches the rules and gets across the feel of the game in a lively and entertaining manner. In the adventure for group play, a script read by the players and GM summarizes why the PCs are there and dumps them right into a fight with Imperial storm troopers. There is no way to back out of this situation and no problems with whining, recalcitrant players. ("But I don't want to go there." "Too late; you're in. What are you going to do?") The adventure is linear, although the GM is encouraged to expand it if desired. Still, since the scenario describes a chase through an abandoned mine, expansions aren't really going to alter its linear aspects. Even so, the scenario is a fun dungeon bash that moves at a rapid pace and contains some excellent staging.

Ten outlines for designing your own adventures round out the package. These provide plenty of hooks and enough staging tips to make it easy to turn them into fully fledged adventures.

**Evaluation:** STAR WARS: The RPG is an excellent action-oriented game which perfectly captures the flavor of the movies. Its colorful background and planet-busting Death Stars rank it as one of the greatest space operas of all time. While an emphasis on action may not be everyone's idea of science-fiction adventure, STAR WARS: The RPG certainly delivers in the thrills department. This is available from: West End Games, Inc., 251 West 30th Street, New York NY 10001, USA.

### TRAVELLER: 2300™ game

Science-fiction role-playing game  
Game Designers' Workshop \$20.00  
Design: Marc W. Miller, Frank Chadwick,  
Timothy B. Browne  
Additional material: Loren Wiseman, Gary

Thomas, Joe Fugate, John Harshman, Matt Renner, Kevin Brown, Steve Venters, Bryan Gibson  
Art director: Barbie Pratt

While STAR WARS: The RPG espouses swashbuckling space opera at its best, the TRAVELLER: 2300 game is firmly rooted in the school of hard science fiction, based on realistic, hard science rules, not the pseudoscience of pulp magazines.

**Background:** The TRAVELLER: 2300 game takes place in the 24th century. Earth has been shattered by the Third World War; nuclear warheads leveled large areas of the planet; governments collapsed; pestilence, famine, and anarchy took control. During the 21st century, the world began to rebuild, and France emerged as the major power on the globe.

National rivalries continue. Although political factions refrain from the use of nukes, minor wars are still fought on Earth. This rivalry extends into space and manifests itself in struggles for new worlds and resources. Early in the 22nd century, the star drive allowed humanity to reach out into the universe.

**Presentation:** Consisting of two 48-page booklets (Referee's and Player's Manuals), three B-page booklets (introductory adventure, a forms booklet, and a list of nearby stars), plus a large, full-color star

map and dice, this game appears complete. Its layout is neat and effective. The books are ordered in a logical fashion, but suffer from a lack of examples. While everything is covered, it is sometimes difficult to understand the designers' intentions from a single reading.

**Character design:** Character design is complete and relatively straightforward. It involves a large amount of player decision, but also uses dice to determine the results. Characters are first defined by the type of world they come from, considering factors such as whether they come from Core or Frontier worlds, and what sort of gravity was present there. These considerations affect the type of body a character possesses: mesomorphic (muscular and husky), ectomorphic (tall and slender), endomorphic (short and stocky), or normal. Each provides certain benefits and affects the rest of the character generation process.

As in most RPGs, attributes are randomly generated. These are then adjusted according to the character's background and body type. A career is then chosen, and skill points from initial training are spent. Careers come from seven basic areas: military, exploratory, academic, colonial, government and civilian, ship crew, and extralegal (e.g., pirates). The process turns out well-rounded charac-

ters; a combination of luck and player decision makes it more than an exercise in random dice rolling, giving players some control over their PCs' destinies.

**Game mechanics:** The core rules revolve around an elegant task-resolution system. To succeed at a task, whether it's shooting a gun or breaking a computer's security, the referee assesses the difficulty of the task by giving it a rating between Simple (3+) and Impossible (19+). From this, he determines which skills, attributes, and tools are required. Success is determined by rolling 1d10 and adding applicable modifiers. If the number is achieved, the task is successfully completed. If the result is a failure, a table is checked to see the extent of failure. Failure is measured by degree, ranging from wasting time to doing something seriously wrong. I like this system; it's neat, expandable, and flexible. Any situation is easily handled by the rules, which generate a feeling of realism without delving into the realms of unfathomable complication.

However, the TRAVELLER: 2300 rules lack any kind of character experience system. A character can survive for years in this game, but he doesn't improve with age or experience; he stays the same forever. Sure, the PC can get more hardware, more influence, and so on, but he never gets any better at solving tasks. To many players, character improvement is essential: It shows you're winning, doesn't it? Why go on adventures if you're not going to get better as a person? In TRAVELLER: 2300 games, adventuring is its own reward — but is this satisfactory? Rather than letting a PC chug along at the same level, he could be awarded skill points at the end of each adventure. This would allow the character gradual improvement and would satisfy the player's desire for that character to become better at what he does. The skill system present could handle it with no bother, making its absence very strange, indeed.

The universe of the future is not a kind place for the would-be gunslinger. Those who live by the gun also die by it (unless they are equipped with the latest in high-tech armor). Even then, these characters are not likely to come out of gunplay unscathed. The combat system is relatively fast-paced, but lacks the swashbuckling elements of STAR WARS: The RPG. The TRAVELLER: 2300 game covers all the usual tactical options and is complete in its handling of vehicle combats, missiles, and explosives, allowing all manner of military engagements to be conducted.

Space combat is rooted in board-game design. Ships and missiles are maneuvered on a hexagonal grid which regulates movement and firing. The system has little role-playing feel to it, and I cringe at the thought of PCs being randomly killed when a shot hits a spaceship.

While characters do get to perform tasks, these are mechanical actions frequently found in board games. ("Okay,



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your engines have been hit; make a roll to see if you can repair them.") Here, the task system has not been used to its best effect. By allowing PCs to influence piloting and have more options in combat, this could have been a much better system.

**GM's tips:** Apart from an interesting and effective NPC characterization system, the TRAVELLER: 2300 game is very light in the GM-guidance department. The motivations of NPCs are viewed, but few hints are given on how to effectively stage their actions. The system is clearly written for the experienced GM who has learned all he can about the GM's art and is simply after a set of rules. Unfortunately, I know no one who fits this category. Even the most seasoned GM can benefit from seeing how designers feel their games should be run. It also helps the GM in picking up new tricks with which to amuse the players. Unfortunately, GMs are on their own in this regard.

**Introductory adventure:** The philosophy just described becomes apparent in the introductory adventure, "The Tricolor's Shadow." Although this adventure makes good use of its background, this is not a detailed adventure; it is merely an outline for the GM to flesh out. There are no tips on how to stage encounters, build atmosphere, or how to guide the PCs through adventures. The introductory

adventure provides no colorful NPCs or statistics for use during the game. The GM is even expected to prepare maps and encounters for the adventure, either beforehand or during game play. While the more experienced GMs will probably be able to do so, newcomers may find this adventure tricky to run. All in all, this adventure comes across as an underdeveloped scenario, reminiscent of the early days of RPG adventure design.

**Evaluation:** The TRAVELLER: 2300 game, with its excellent character generation and task resolution system, certainly has a realistic feel. To anyone looking for a science-fiction game, it provides a plausible background and opportunities to adventure in the dawn of humanity's stellar exploration. Experienced GMs will have few problems with the game's less-than-satisfactory handling of adventure staging and description, but novices should look elsewhere for their first science-fiction RPG. This is available from: Game Designers' Workshop, P.O. Box 1646, Bloomington IL 61702-1646, USA.

#### **BATTLETECH® game**

Science-fiction board game

FASA Corporation

\$20.00

Design: Jordan K. Weisman and L.R.

"Butch" Leeper

Development: L.R. "Butch" Leeper, Forest

G. Brown, William John Wheeler, L. Ross Babcock III, Samuel B. Baker II, James R. Kellar

Background: Patrick Larkin, Hero Games

Production managers: Jordan K. Weisman,

Karen Vander Mey

Art director: Dana Knutson

#### **MECHWARRIOR® game book**

Role-playing supplement for the BATTLE-TECH game

FASA Corporation

\$12.00

Design: Richard K. Meyer, Walter H. Hunt,

Evan Jamieson, L. Ross Babcock III,

Kevin Stein, Jordan K. Weisman, Patrick

Larkin, William H. Keith Jr., David Boyle,

D. Brad Frazee, Lisa M. Hunt

Editorial staff: L. Ross Babcock III, Donna

Ippolito, Todd Huettel

Production managers: Jordan K. Weisman,

Karen Vander Mey

Art director: Dana Knutson

**Background:** Huge BattleMechs tower above the battlefields of the future, dealing out death and destruction on a grand scale. Developed by Terran scientists more than 500 years ago (by campaign time), BattleMechs are big, mean, and deadly. Armed with lasers, particle beams, autocannons and missiles, BattleMechs are capable of destroying anything that stands in their path. But BattleMechs are not

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# DAILY PLANET GAMING SUPPLEMENT

Special Winter Edition

March 4th, 1988

Number 8

## DC™ HEROES RPG CONVENTION TOURNAMENTS

Tournaments will be run at the following conventions:

**Balticon 22**  
April 1-3, 1988  
Hunt's Valley Inn  
P.O. Box 686  
Baltimore, MD  
21203

**Amigocon 3**  
April 29-May 1, 1988  
P.O. Box 3177  
El Paso, TX  
79923

If your convention will be running a DC Heroes RPG tournament. Please contact Mayfair Games for prizes. If we're notified well enough in advance, we will list your convention in this *Daily Planet™* Gaming Supplement.

## QUESTIONABLE STATISTICS

The Question™ battles for truth on the streets of Hub City™, a city as dirty in its politics as Chicago, as gritty in its atmosphere as New York, and as explosive in its crime as Gotham City™. Its corruption goes so deep and is so commonplace that only The Question's curiosity and persistence ever forces anyone to expose it at all.

### THE QUESTION alias Charles Victor Szasz™

DEX: 5 STR: 4 BODY: 5  
INT: 4 WILL: 5 MIND: 4  
INFL: 5 AURA: 4 SPIRIT: 4  
INITIATIVE: 14(22) HERO POINTS: 60

### Skills:

Acrobatics: 5  
Charisma: 5  
Detective: 4  
Martial Artist: 8  
Thief: 4  
Vehicles (Land): 4  
Weaponry (Missile Weapons): 5



### Powers:

Danger Sense: 5  
Systemic Antidote: 4

### Limitations:

Catastrophic Irrational Attraction to Learning the Truth (curiosity)

Serious interest in the Welfare of Children (especially orphans)

### Connections:

Hub City Underworld: Low  
Hub City Government: High  
Newspaper/TV: High

### Motivation:

Seeking Justice

### Wealth:

Comfortable

### Race:

Human

### Occupation:

Reporter

### Equipment:

#### Face Mask

DEX: 0 STR: 0 BODY: 3  
CHARGES: N/A  
COST: 16 HPs +\$60

Limitation: The adhesive is subject to Szasz's physiological changes

The Question's face mask is a featureless mask which completely obscures his own facial features yet allows him to breathe, view, and talk through it without difficulty. The mask is adhered to The Question's face through the use of an after-shave mixture formulated to Szasz's body chemistry. When the mask is not in use, it can be stored in a compartment in The Question's belt buckle.

#### Color Changing Gas

DEX: 0 STR: 0 BODY: 0  
CHARGES: 10  
COST: 96 HPs +\$500

### Powers: Fog: 5

### Matter Manipulation: 5

The Question uses a special binary gas emitted through his belt buckle to change the color of his chemically treated clothes and hair. Aside from its color changing properties, the gas is totally harmless and a neat special effect.

### Background:

The early life of Charles Victor Szasz is a mystery, except

for an account of his having lived at a Hub City orphanage as a child. How he adopted the identity of Victor Sage™ is still unknown, as is how he became acquainted with Aristotle Rodor™, the man who created The Question's equipment.

When Sage reached adulthood, he became a television reporter and learned of the corruption that had found its way into Hub City's government. He decided to put an end to the corruption and with the help of Rodor created the guise of The Question.

In one of his first outings as The Question, he acquired a videotape which exposed Mayor Wesley Fermin's™ activities. One of Fermin's underworld associates, the Rev. Dr. Jeremiah Hatch™ vowed to see The Question destroyed. The Reverend subsequently hired Lady Shiva™ to defeat the hero. She did and several of Hatch's assistants then beat The Question nearly to death, and tossed his body into the harbor.

Sage woke up in the home of Prof. Rodor, where he learned he had been rescued by Lady Shiva. He then went to a remote mountain retreat where he lived with a handicapped, Richard Dragon™, master of the martial arts. Although Dragon was crippled and in a wheelchair, he trained Sage in the martial arts.

Sage returned to Hub City, and resumed his life as The Question.

### Role-Playing: The Question

When role-playing The Question, two facets of his personality should be kept in mind at all times: his determination to fight corruption, and even more important, his passion for learning the truth at any cost. His Irrational Attraction has gotten him into trouble on many occasions, yet this never deters him.



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simply high-powered, fully automated death machines; humans are required to pilot them. At the heart of every BattleMech sits a vulnerable creature of flesh and blood.

At first, this pilot was simply a two-dimensional character capable of actions resolved only through the BattleMech itself. The origins of the BattleMech pilot lay in the BATTLETECH® board game — a slick set of rules for pitting BattleMechs against each other. With the addition of MECHWARRIOR® game book, this pilot has now come to life and can function outside of his BattleMech. The MECHWARRIOR book is not a role-playing game in its own right but a supplement for the BATTLETECH board game. Thus, before looking at the MECHWARRIOR supplement, a quick examination of the board game is needed.

The BATTLETECH game is a brilliantly conceived and presented game of robotic combat set in the war-torn universe of the Successor States. The Golden Age of the Star League is over. Before its fall, a united humanity journeyed to the stars; now, five Successor States vie with each other for power and control in a new dark age. With the passing of the Star League went many of its greatest achievements; technology has regressed, states struggle to maintain their aging BattleMechs, and only a limited number of factories are capable of building new ones. It is the age of the MechWarrior, where battles are fought for the necessities of life and to bring glory to the victors.

**Presentation:** The BATTLETECH game box contains two full-color terrain maps, 48 colorful stand-up BattleMech counters, four sheets of playing markers, plastic counter stands, dice, and a rule book. The production of this game is of very high quality.

Starting with a simple training exercise, the rule book builds the game's complexity in a systematic and easy-to-absorb manner. By the end of the book, players are destroying both the terrain and enemy BattleMechs with ease. The BATTLETECH game system requires tactical thinking and detailed combat resolution, without becoming too mechanically complicated. Add in the background which appears in sidebars throughout the book, and you have a very good game rich in depth and technical information.

The MECHWARRIOR supplement builds on the BATTLETECH system, transforming it from a set of combat rules into a role-playing game. This is one of the supplement's strengths — and one of its weaknesses. Caught smack dab in the middle of the BATTLETECH game set-up, the MECHWARRIOR supplement must accommodate combat-heavy board-game features not usually found in a role-playing game.

The MECHWARRIOR supplement comes as 144-page softback book. The layout is more utilitarian than striking. This is offset by 16 color plates which graphically

portray the badges, uniforms, and equipment of the Successor States. The BATTLETECH game sidebars have been replaced with more traditional background sections that are useful for finding information during game, but not as easily digestible as sidebars. Nevertheless, these chapters add flesh to the bare bones of BATTLETECH games. Lacking in explicit staging tips, the background is aimed more at providing a detailed insight into the motivations and actions of the powers of the future.

**Character design:** This element of the MECHWARRIOR supplement is firmly rooted in the BATTLETECH game; working within this limitation, the designers have done a good job. Characters are created by spending a set number of points on attributes, skills, and BattleMechs. The main thrust of the design process is aimed at the MechWarriors, but it does include design sequences for techs (general repairmen), aerospace pilots, and scouts (information gatherers and forward observers). The system creates characters with a wide range of skills, ranging from BattleMech gunnery to diplomacy. MECHWARRIOR rules mesh directly with BATTLETECH rules, allowing the characters to be used without modifications between systems.

The size of your BattleMech depends partially on how many points you are prepared to spend on it; it doesn't guarantee a big BattleMech, but it helps. Consequently, characters in the big BattleMechs don't have the high attributes or skill levels that the pilots of the smaller machines have. While obviously a device for game balance, its use in campaign terms is hard to justify.

This design consideration has also influenced the shape of the game. In most RPGs, players take on the role of one character; in MECHWARRIOR games, players have to play at least two characters and sometimes more. The reason is simple: A BattleMech unit requires support staff, as well as warriors. While the warriors are fighting, the support staff sits around behind the scenes (a sure recipe for boredom).

Once characters have been created, it's time to get the BattleMech unit together. These units vary in size from a lance (four mechs) up to a company (12 mechs). As it is possible for two players to end up running a company between them (plus its support staff in the form of techs, etc.), this can lead to the situation in which players are either running two or three MechWarriors or the GM has to handle a large number of NPCs — not a bad thing in itself, but it does cut down on individual characterization. An easy-to-use system to generate personalities would go a long way toward overcoming this problem.

**Game mechanics:** As can be expected, the game mechanics center on the problems of keeping a BattleMech unit functional and the kinds of rewards and obstacles likely to be encountered by a BattleMech unit. In this regard, the game

mechanics are complete and fairly simple to handle. The mechanics are rather weak in the nonviolent interactions between PCs and NPCs. Here, some examples would have been useful to show how MechWarriors can deal with life without gunplay.

For the BattleMech combat system, the BATTLETECH game is essential. MECHWARRIOR rules do contain amendments and additions to this system but are incomplete in themselves. The small-arms system uses a variation of the BattleMech combat system, relying on hex grids and movement points to regulate the action.

Experience points earned by player characters during adventures are spent to increase skills and abilities. The more proficient you are at a skill, the more it costs to improve it. The system is not as fluid as STAR WARS: The RPG, but it does its job. Experience points can also be spent to create abstract contacts and purchase titles (another case of game balance gaining precedence over role-playing).

**GM's tips:** The MECHWARRIOR book's greatest strength is in allowing BATTLETECH campaigns to be set up and run. With MECHWARRIOR rules, players can design and run their own characters in battle after battle. Tables are provided for generating typical assignments and for detailing events, either on a local, day-to-day basis or on a larger scale. By using these tables, a GM can easily keep the MechWarriors occupied. Whether scavenging enemy BattleMechs for spare parts or dealing with a guerilla raid by a bounty hunter, the system covers it all.

**Introductory adventure:** The absence of an introductory scenario shows how closely the supplement is tied to the BATTLETECH rules. The GM assigns the PCs a mission and generates the opposition. The outcome of the first conflict determines the next part of the campaign. For example, a defeat for the PCs or a costly victory might see them running for cover or being forced to adventure outside of their BattleMechs.

**Evaluation:** Not being a game in its own right puts the MECHWARRIOR supplement in a strange position. As an expansion to the BATTLETECH rules, it does a good job. The MECHWARRIOR system's abstract mechanics can either be taken as they are or simply ignored. No one is going to make you use them. For anyone without the BATTLETECH rules, MECHWARRIOR cannot be recommended. I do suggest, however, that you do try the BATTLETECH game. If you like it, it might inspire you to form your own BattleMech unit and battle your way across the Successor States. These rules are available from: FASA Corporation, P.O. Box 6930, Chicago IL 60680, USA.

### Short and sweet

IM3 *The Best of Intentions*, By Ken Rolston. TSR, Inc., \$5.95. How would you like to be an Immortal: bigger, tougher, and smarter than those low-lives on the Prime

Material plane? Nothing would bother you then. . . or would it?

In this humorous adventure, a bunch of rookie Immortals set out to solve a mystery of cosmic proportions. These characters compete in the Olympic Trials, journey to the weird and multifarious planes of Mazikeen, and deal with heaps of strange events. Colorful pregenerated characters, excellent staging, nice cut-up bits, inserts, and amusing Jim Holloway illustrations make this a real treat for would-be gods. *The Best of Intentions* is a fun romp through the mystical realms of the D&D® game's Immortals Set. Miss this one it at your own peril.

GURPS® Fantasy, by Steve Jackson. Steve Jackson Games, \$9.95. Really two packs in one, GURPS Fantasy delivers the GURPS's magic system and the background to the campaign world in a highly satisfying way. With over 300 spells and 20 colleges of

magic, the magic system is wide, varied, and detailed. Best of all, it works! Fitting snugly into the GURPS system, the rules for magic allow characters to create all kinds of impressive magical effects.

Rich in background and plundering freely from Earth history and religion, the world of Yrth is easily accessible and nicely presented. Snatched from Earth in the greatest magical backfire ever, the Crusaders still wage war on their ancient enemy, the Saracens, simultaneously contending with a wide range of ravaging monsters. Extensive commentary on the countries of Yrth and plenty of staging tips make this a strong contender on the campaign front. GURPS Fantasy is an impressive product that is well worth a look. This is available from: Steve Jackson Games, Box 18957, Austin TX 78760-8957, USA.

GAMMARAUDERS™ game, by Allen Varney; development by Mike Breault, Zeb

Cook, and Jeff Grubb; World Book by Jeff Grubb. TSR, Inc., \$15.00. Across the radioactive lands of the Gamma Age stomps a 50'-tall gorilla, intent on destruction and bristling with weaponry. Onko the Gorillian™ is just one of the many monstrous bioborgs featured in this fast-paced board game of death and destruction. Simple mechanics and free-flowing card play make the GAMMARAUDERS game one of rapid reversals and endless fun. The World Book gives you the lowdown on the folks and bioborgs who inhabit this wonderful post-holocaust world. Revel in the delights of fins with everything. Tune in to the Men in Black — black slacks, black shoes (with fins), black jackets, white shirts (of course), black ties, and black porkpie hats. Or drop out with the FOWLOTEs — Friends Of What's Left Of The Earth.

Ω

## FORUM

(continued from page 8)

I heard this idea about "vampires" most recently at [a medical] meeting in 1984. The disease is rare throughout most of the world, but in some isolated communities where inbreeding has been common, there could be many cases. These disfigured, nocturnal, blood-drinking humans would develop their own subculture. Pitied or feared during their lives, they might later become the stuff of our own legends.

Ed Friedlander, M.D.  
Johnson City TN

It's strange how Eric Pollard (issue #126) can get things so reversed. The game is indeed biased on alignment, but that bias is toward good, not evil, as Pollard would have it, and toward LG in particular.

Pollard cites the use of poison and spell reversal as favoring evil. But poison is frequently not available, and when used can set off spontaneous attacks on the user from passersby (see the *Players Handbook*, pp. 29 and 107). The reversal of spells works in two ways. The evil cleric is just as hesitant to use the unreversed spell as the cleric is to use the reversed. And the reversed version is almost without exception the weaker of the two. Thus the good cleric will freely use cure *light wounds* while the evil cleric is stuck with *cause light wounds*, which does barely as much damage as his mace.

But let's look at some of the other advantages Good gets. Pollard seems to feel assassins and thieves balance rangers and paladins (and his opinion notwithstanding, there are a few good thieves around as well). Just how he determines that overpowered classes like rangers are merely the equal of wimps is his to explain. Note next that good alignments gain 10% on hiring loyalty. Where aligned magical items exist, they are more likely to be good aligned and more powerful in the good form than the evil one. Take the *talismans of pure good* and *ultimate evil* as examples.

Next, our evil character finds that all the other evil types will attack him as will the good ones. Our good character finds he has allies when he needs them.

Most important, look at all the modules. They are nearly all good biased. Somewhere, there must be a module for evil PCs to excel in, but it is a rarity; the chance to do good deeds is proclaimed in dozens of modules. Our evil PC is

going to have to suppress his evil tendencies or sit idle while the rest of the party has fun.

The bias of AD&D is sharply toward good. Evil gets the worst of the deal.

David Carl Argall  
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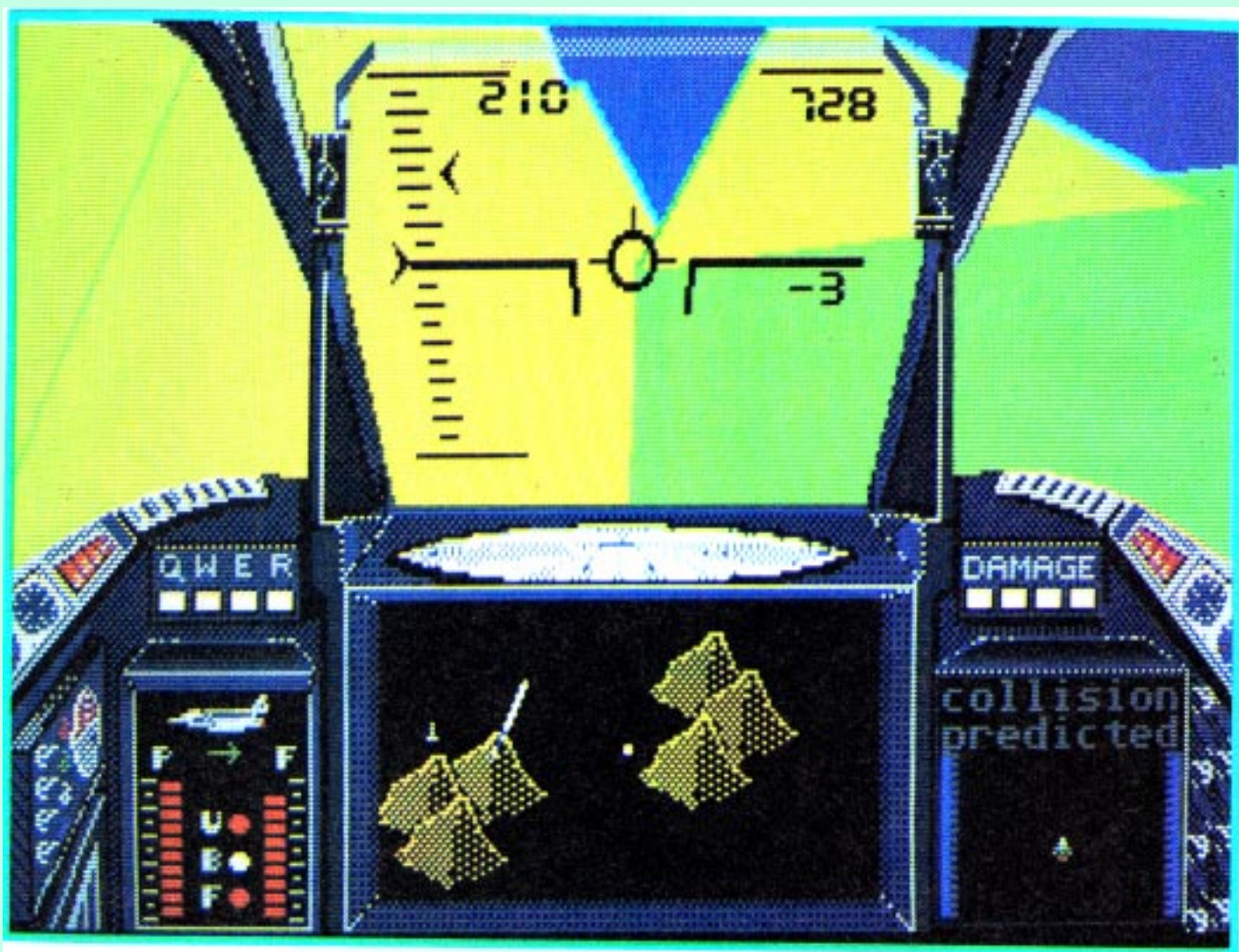
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# The Role of Computers



## *Of ancient and other legacies*

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and Kirk Lesser**

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You have only seconds left before your jet meets the mountainside — and you still have to save the Sixth Fleet! *Harrier Combat Simulator* is for the Atari ST, from Mindscape Inc. (see page 84).

Our October column caused a controversy with a few DRAGON® Magazine readers. We had discussed the brands of computers we felt were most appropriate for gaming. A flurry of letters from owners of Commodore 64/128 and Atari 8-bit systems indicated that some readers felt slighted by our comments, accusing us of everything from ignorance to a bias for Apple computers.

Before we respond to those letters, our background for making such statements should be offered. We have founded five national computer magazines and have over eight years of experience writing about desktop computer systems, having published articles in both U.S. and Canadian computer publications. We have also edited or written for 16 national computer magazines. Our home office is equipped with a Commodore 64, an Atari ST, an Apple IIe, an Apple IIGS, an Apple Macintosh Plus, a Tandy 4000 and an Amiga 2000 with Bridgeboard. We are currently the publishers and editors of *Computing*

Today!, an electronic computer news and review magazine that appears on NewsNet. Our industry sources number nearly 1,000, and we verify our source material and use the products under discussion. Our opinions are based on years of experience in the computer industry.

Letters from writers who explained why they thought our opinions were incorrect were thoroughly read. One such writer is Mark Bell of Millville, N.J., whose correspondence indicated a love for the Commodore 64 machine. We cannot argue with Mark's point regarding the surplus of C64/128 software made available by companies such as Electronic Arts, Activision, Epyx, Accolade, Mindscape, and Spectrum HoloByte. Regardless of the fact that the number of C64/128 owners may be inflated, there are millions of C64/128 users. We use one ourselves, and enjoy several programs running on that machine. Perhaps we were too hard on the C64/128, especially in regard to that system being an affordable computer with lots of vendor support materials. There are hundreds of programs for the C64/128, such as *The Legacy of the Ancients* from Electronic Arts (reviewed this month), that are far more graphically pleasing than their counterparts on an Apple II. The C64/128 cannot, however, measure up to the graphics and sound capabilities of the Apple IIGS because the C64/128 is based on an older technology. Mark politely registered his valid point and concluded that our opinion should also be respected. We appreciate Mark's attitude and encourage any reader's opinion that is constructive in nature.

Another well-written letter was received from Stanley Pfister of El Monte, Calif. He also disagrees with our C64/128 stance and concludes by stating that "at best it could be said the Commodore 64 and 128 computers are being made obsolete by an improved technology. A technology that currently comes with a higher price I might add. But you can bet your 1d10 the software companies you mention in your article ARE NOT avoiding the Commodore market like the plague."

We agree with the statement regarding the continuing vendor support. If Commodore Business Machines has its way, it will provide an affordable price route for C64/128 owners to upgrade to the Amiga 500 or 2000 systems. We do not agree with Mr. Pfister's comment that it was "improper for you not to include the MOST affordable system to your readers," as DRAGON Magazine appeals to "youth, students and practical budget people." As we have been told by retail-chain owners and sales people, most computers for use by youth and students are purchased for them by relatives. For work in an educational environment, either the Apple II, Macintosh, an IBM, or IBM workalike is selected.

We received one letter that vigorously protested our Atari 8-bit stance, but the writer was rude and we do not feel a

response to his attacks are necessary. We do not claim to know everything, and we acknowledge that piracy is an issue that affects all computer systems. Ask a developer, however, which system he is most likely to program for, and the two systems found at the bottom of a developer's list remain the C64/128 and Atari 8-bit computers. One area that developers will certainly keep an eye on is how quickly the installed user-base for the C64/128 and Atari 8-bit machines increases. Until either company can show impressive figures for these units, development of new software will remain at current levels.

In the future, we shall rein in comments on the systems themselves unless circumstances dictate otherwise. As Charles Stembridge of San Bernadino, Calif., aptly stated, "Computers are like belly buttons: everyone loves his own."

Now for the good news. If you think we are *down* on Commodore or Atari computers, think again. We have had the pleasure of working with a new Amiga 2000 and are stunned by the computer's capabilities. The Amiga 2000 and Amiga 500 are natural upgrades for C64/128 owners; both feature the most stunning graphics displays of any microcomputer currently on the market. Add stereo sound, and you have a fantastic recreational machine. The Amiga 2000 goes far beyond playing games, as this machine is perfect for the business environment. With an attached Bridgeboard, the Amiga 2000 runs IBM PC programs in either monochrome or color mode. The Amiga 2000 is a technological marvel, and with the included 20-mega-byte hard-disk drive, the user has all the capabilities one could wish for in a recreational and business computer.

We recently visited COMDEX/Fall in Las Vegas, a massive computer show where we viewed the new Atari MEGA 2 and MEGA 4 computers. Although we have not had the opportunity to use the Atari computers hands-on, we were most impressed by their operation at the show. The Atari MEGA 2 and MEGA 4 are targeted at businesses, with recreational capabilities also present. The MEGA 2 and MEGA 4 now head our list as natural upgrades for the Atari ST

[The following games are rated on a scale of one to five stars, with one star being the lowest rating.]

#### Feature review

***The Legacy of the Ancients*** \*\*\* 1/2  
(Commodore 64/128 and Apple II versions)

Entertaining and exciting: Both words describe *The Legacy of the Ancients* fantasy adventure game distributed by Electronic Arts (see address in "News and new products"). The Commodore 64/128 version is better in terms of graphics than the Apple II version. This game comes with an extremely short user's manual and a Code Disk. The latter is actually a pirating deterrent; once you leave the main Museum (described below) and wish to reenter it,

you cannot do so without a specified code that is revealed by the Code Disk.

The game centers on the Tarmalon Galactic Museum, which was built by a race of Ancients for their own amusement and education. Within the Museum are display cases that are actually portals to various parts of the host planet — in this case, the world of Tarmalon. The Ancients forbade employees of the Museum to interfere with the inhabitants of the host planet — but in this game, the player stumbles across the body of the Museum's Caretaker on a road. The Caretaker's golden armband, a leather scroll, an Access Wheel, and three coins are retrieved by the player on impulse. When this is done, the Museum suddenly appears. During exploration of the Museum (which should be mapped), the player learns that the Caretaker had finally retrieved the evil Wizard's Compendium, the leather scroll now in the player's possession. Originally, 12 powerful Tarmalon wizards met to compile their spells into this one scroll, which must now be destroyed before the entire world of Tarmalon is annihilated. The scroll is evil and cannot be destroyed by blade or fire, but the player must ensure the scroll's neutralization.

The Museum contains several display cases, some offering critical game information and others providing gateways to the world of Tarmalon itself. Some display cases offer an object to the player (such as a knife). In order to access each of the gateways, a particular coin is needed. The Weaponry case, for example, requires a jade coin.

New locales should be *thoroughly* mapped before deciding upon a course of action, especially in the Museum itself. For example, one of the first display cases you encounter is the Weaponry case. Your bare hands are currently all that you have for defensive and offensive purposes — hardly effective against hostile denizens. The temptation to spend a jade coin at the Weaponry display case is strong, but our suggestion is that you wait. One of the latter display cases — A Fountain — allows you to go on a quest to enrich your character now and in the future, should you accept the job. With the case's present enrichment, you should be able to purchase good weaponry and armor when you enter the first inhabited location on Tarmalon, which is accomplished through the display case named Thornberry. Both A Fountain and Thornberry require a jade coin, and as you only possess two jade coins, you can see why we suggest you *not* buy the weapon with one of them.

Once you enter Thornberry, map the city and learn the location of the shops. Borrowing heavily enables the player to equip himself handsomely for forays into the wilderness areas. Talk to everyone encountered in *any* residential area. You might find others filled with immense personal enrichment.

As a menu-driven program, *The Legacy*



of the Ancients offers a variety of screens for game management. The opening menu offers the player a variety of choices:

1. Play a game;
2. Read simple instructions (for keyboard and joystick users);
3. View scenes from Legacy; and,
4. Perform a color test.

If selection 1 is chosen, the player may start a **New** character or reload a **Saved** character from disk. In the event you have forgotten to initialize a save-game disk prior to play, the submenu allows you to initialize a save-character disk from within the program. This process requires only about 1½ minutes on a C64 computer.

When the game is underway, the game screen is presented. A list of orders is

presented to the left of the main view window, with a second window at the bottom of the screen for messages. Some actions are only available in a dungeon or wilderness, designated with a **D** or **W** (respectively) in parentheses. **A** means "anytime." These commands are in table form here.

When you need to check inventory, two screens are presented. The information above the line remains constant, while the variable information below the line falls into two separate screens: one for weaponry and the other for possessions.

To access the commands, remember that if a command is not preceded by a number, enter the first letter of the command desired using the keyboard (e.g., **A** for

Armor). Movement is handled using the appropriate positioning of the joystick itself. Pressing up means forward, pressing right or left turns the player onscreen right or left, and pulling backwards moves the character backwards. The keyboard can also be used to move the character, and the joystick can also select commands, but a combination of the two provides the best results.

Once in Tarmalon, you should find a town with a healer as soon as you can. Save the game often, especially after you notice how quickly your hit points can dwindle to zero in confrontations. Hang around the area where the healer is until you can afford to purchase healing herbs to take with you to other parts of the world. If you can find Holy Point, you should eventually succeed. Finally, we suggest you go northeast.

Magic spells include Magic Flame, Firebolt, Befuddle Spell, Psycho Strength (superhuman strength for up to 30 attacks in dungeon environments), Kill Flash (the ultimate spell), and Seek Spell (transports you to the Museum no matter where you are). There are 24 dungeon levels, all offering monetary rewards and clues.

*The Legacy of the Ancients* provides many exciting events and is extremely easy to master. The game encompasses a vast world filled with 32 different creatures (not all are always hostile) and many different cities and towns that are adventures in and of themselves. The player must map the world and the cities in order to learn where to buy certain provisions, where to obtain advancement training for specific characteristics, where spells and weapons or armor may be purchased, and where to bank or borrow money. Gambling may be used to increase (or decrease) bankrolls, and the temptation to rob a bank might sometimes be all-consuming. Both land and water adventures await the intrepid player. All of this maneuvering requires thought for eventual success in destroying the Wizard's Compendium. *The Legacy of the Ancients* is a great deal of fun. Although it is not the most challenging adventure game on the market today, it is one that Apple II and C64/128 gamers should consider.

#### News and new products

##### Accolade

20813 Stevens Creek Boulevard  
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(408) 446-5757

The first Apollo-mission simulation for personal computers has now been released — *Apollo 18: Mission to the Moon*. This game is available for the C64/128 and recreates the original lunar missions. The screen graphics are actually based on footage of the Apollo flights and depict the different stages of space flight in detail. The player assumes two roles in the game: one of mission control specialist, the other

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### Legacy of the Ancients Game Commands

Command	Used in:	Description
Armor	A	Allows selection of the armor you wish to wear
Climb	D	Allows you to climb up or down (useful for those holes found in dungeons)
Disembark	W	Allows you to dismount from whatever transportation you are using, then walk
End	D or W	Stops all activity and allows you to save the game
Fight	A	Allows you to attack a target
Gamespeed	A,	Causes the length-of-time messages to remain in the message window
Hold	A	Lets you hold items from your inventory at the ready
Inventory	A	Shows the player what he possesses (a great way to rest in the game when deciding what to do)
Leave	W	Gives you a quick way to leave a town (the command doesn't work if you have robbed someone)
Magic	A	Lets you cast a spell
Open	A	Lets you open closed items
Pass	A	Allows you to do nothing for one turn
Rob	W	Lets you steal something
Speak	A	Lets you talk to the person standing next to you
Take	A	Lets you pick up an item that is within your reach
Use	A	Lets you use what you are holding
Weapon	A	Lets you change weapons for an upcoming battle
Xamine	A	Offers information on your immediate surroundings*
HP	A	Shows the number of hit points you have remaining
Food	A	Shows how many days of food you have left
Gold	A	Shows how much wealth you are carrying (this amount does not include deposits made in banks)

\* In the wilderness, this command tells you what kind of terrain you are in, the amount of food being consumed, and the speed at which you are traveling. For example, traveling through grasslands requires the lowest amount of food consumption, and such terrain should be sought for all travel. For dungeon use, this command warns about traps. While wandering about a castle, the same command details information about items you can see.

of the astronaut. There are eight stages of play and different tasks to perform, with digitized voice and sound, for \$29.95.

#### Mini-review

##### Mini-Putt

(C64/128 version)

\*\*\*

This is a realistic game of miniature golf, played on a variety of courses with tricky traps, bedeviling ricochets, and the strangest green gradations you'll ever want to confront. This is a lighthearted game from Accolade suitable for anyone who ever wished to putt his way to enjoyment.

#### Actionsoft

201 West Springfield Avenue  
Suite 711  
Champaign IL 61820  
(217) 398-8388

*ThunderChopper* has made its debut for the Apple II and C64/128 computer. This simulation puts you at the controls of an advanced Hughes 530MG Defender helicopter to perform scout, rescue, and attack simulations. You can land on helipads

or rooftops with ease. With enough experience under your belt, you can become involved in dramatic escorts, in land and sea rescues, and in combat scenarios. The price is \$29.95.

#### Activision

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*Super Pitfall* for Nintendo Entertainment System brings the arcade adventures of the legendary Pitfall Harry home with more than 270 screens.

The fabulous *Might and Magic, Book One: Secret of the Inner Sanctum* has been released for IBM-micros and compatibles, and for the C64/128 system. No two games are ever alike in the immense world of Varn, which includes over 50 areas to explore, 13,000 locations to discover, and 94 magic spells and over 250 magic items to find. This game is another "must have" for computer adventurers; it is priced at \$49.95 for the IBM version and \$39.95 for the C64/128 version. We reviewed the Apple II version in this column in issue #122.

#### Broderbund Software

17 Paul Drive  
San Rafael CA 94903-2101  
(415) 492-3200

Two new offerings from one of the leading computer-software companies have made their debut. *Wings of Fury* is a colorful World War II action game for the Apple II computer that puts the player in the cockpit of an F65F Hellcat fighter/bomber for bombing and fleet-defense missions over the Pacific. The action is realistic, and the price is \$34.95.

*Magnetron* is for the Commodore 64, an arcade-action space shoot-'em-up that takes the player far into the future. The player pilots a tiny photon fighter in a battle against Magnetron Generators: powerful, unpredictable magnetic-force weapons that push, pull, and swirl you toward doom. This game is \$29.95.

#### DataSoft

(distributed by Electronic Arts)  
1820 Gateway Drive  
San Mateo CA 94404  
(415) 571-7171

#### Mini-review

##### Alternate Reality: The City

\*\*\*

(Macintosh version)

Without doubt, this fantasy-adventure game is one of the hardest to get started that we have ever encountered. *The City* takes the player (who has been kidnapped by aliens) to the City of Xebec's Demise. The player knows nothing, is assigned personal attributes, and must figure out what is going on from the moment he passes through the first gate. Difficult as it is to survive, *The City* becomes addictive. In addition, characters that survive *The City* are usable in that game's sequel, *The Dungeon*, which we feel is a far better game. The Macintosh version has the same ridiculous drawback that plagues the computerized SCRABBLE® game (reviewed below): You cannot play the game if you boot the system from your hard disk. If you survive the hardships and win the battles, you could be ready for the sequel. The price is \$39.95 for the Macintosh and Atari ST versions (with a \* \* ½ rating for the latter). Apple II and Atari 8-bit versions are \$29.95, and the IBM version is \$34.95.

DataSoft's *Alternate Reality: The Dungeon* has been ported to the Apple II computer at a pricing of \$39.95. Original versions for the Atari 800 and Commodore 64/128 cost \$39.95.

#### Electronic Arts

1820 Gateway Drive  
San Mateo CA 94404  
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*Adventure Construction Set* is now available for IBM micros and compatibles for \$14.95. This conversion includes all of the built-in adventures and editing fea-

tures of the original 8-bit version.

**Chuck Yeager's Advanced Flight Trainer** is now available for the C64/128 computer and is priced at \$34.95.

**Earl Weaver Baseball** is now available for the IBM microcomputer and compatibles. We consider the Amiga version of the simulation to be the finest baseball simulation ever designed for personal computers. We are likewise impressed by the PC conversion, which has all of the features that the Amiga product possesses, except for digitized sound and less-appealing graphics. If you have never seen the Amiga version, the IBM format will be highly appealing.

The **Lords of Conquest** conquer-the-world strategy game is now available for IBM micros and compatibles for \$14.95. **World Tour Golf**, which was designed for as many as four players, has been ported to the Apple IIGS. Both play and practice are included in this golf simulation, which also provides a variety of golf courses (such as St. Andrews, Augusta, and Pebble Beach). Attributes include handicaps, strength variations, club skills, and hook and slice tendencies. Split-screen animated graphics give both an overhead view and a golfer's-eye-view of the hole, showing realistic terrain including trees, hills, hazards, and bad lies. The Apple IIGS version is \$39.95, the Commodore 64/128 version is \$34.95, and the IBM micros and compatibles are \$49.95.

#### Mini-reviews

##### **Empire**

(Atari ST version)

The Parker Brothers RISK® game is familiar to many. It holds many memories for us as well; the game was one of the diversions Hartley participated in during combat lulls in Vietnam in 1968. The excitement of playing RISK games brought many combat-weary men together to share something enjoyable after facing the horrors of war. The counterfeit war on the board was an environment far better than the genuine war beyond the flimsy canvas openings of the hootch. The fleet-

ing truces secretly made, the driving urge to conquer all, and the camaraderie of friends all provided an enjoyable madness!

With this introduction, you must understand the trepidation with which a computerized RISK game was approached. We are happy to report that *Empire* not only matches the RISK game in excitement, but surpasses it as a single or multiplayer game. Developed by Interstel, the folks who brought us *Starfleet I* and *II*, *Empire* has far more depth and strategy than the board game could even begin to provide. For as many as three players (or two players with a computer opponent, or one human with two computer opponents), *Empire* is an addictive strategy game; we've been seated at a rather involved scenario for almost two weeks, for two to three hours a night!

The Atari ST version offers a variety of battlegrounds in full-color and includes great combat sounds (such as gunfire, ships' turbines, and aircraft engines) when these individual units are brought into play. Attack groups are built from separate components of Army units (tanks), fighters, troop transports, submarines, destroyers, cruisers, aircraft carriers and battleships. As in RISK games, the successful commander builds slowly, making certain those cities he already controls are protected from enemy incursions. Regardless of which one of the game maps is used, it is important at the start to make certain the tank forces are supported by fighters. Also, be certain to have subs and battleships at hand before starting naval maneuvers; few can defeat the latter, and the former can defeat powerful enemy surface ships.

One strategy noted regarding the capture of a coastal city is to bring battleships and cruisers to the coastline. When enemy tanks attempt to recapture the city your landing forces have secured, the powerful batteries of the battleships and cruisers can pound a counterattack senseless. The aircraft carriers, which carry as many as eight fighters, are also important members of a task force, as flattop-based planes can

make excursions into unknown territories (shown as black areas) and map them for future navigation. Should the fighters run into enemy aircraft or land forces, there are still several planes available on the carrier to fight the opposing forces.

Troop transports can carry as many as six armies. Transports can also bring tanks behind enemy lines via open sea-routes to pinch the enemy command and establish fronts farther and farther into enemy territory. When a task force is composed of several transports, assign subs and surface craft to escort them.

The final feature of this marvelous strategy game is the ability to create worlds, thanks to the built-in map generator. Land mass can be *blotched* (growing of its own accord), and you can place cities where you wish. Cities are vital, as they are the production centers that turn out your battle units. Inland cities only produce armies or fighters, while coastal cities produce armies, fighters, or ships.


Victory can take quite some time to accomplish; you will need to get a feel for the game play before this is apparent. It is possible, however, to establish percentage chances of success for you and your human or computer opponents. We found an evenhanded approach to be the most exciting way to play, requiring all players' abilities be around the 50% mark. *Empire* is a worthwhile offering!

#### **The Computer Edition of SCRABBLE®**

(Macintosh version)

Many have enjoyed playing SCRABBLE games with family and friends, spending hours pondering how to score the most points with the letter-embossed wooden tiles. Leisure Games has now produced the official computerized version of the SCRABBLE game. Of all the versions available, our favorite is the Macintosh format, which accurately reproduces the game board, tiles, and game pieces onscreen. A clock is provided to help prompt rapid thinking to spell and place a word within a user-defined time limit. This is no easy chore, especially when the player is allotted a variety of consonants and but a single vowel. There are also lightning- and tournament-timing alternatives.

Your letter rack is presented at the bottom of the screen. You type a word composed of the letters from the rack and if the word is accepted by the game, you are requested to move the cursor to the game board. After positioning the word onscreen, a mouse click places the word in the selected position and scores the move. You may also pass your turn, request a hint of one playable word, and see the tile values at any time you wish (through use of a pull-down menu). This is an extremely enjoyable game. Why only a three-star rating? Many Mac users also possess a hard-disk drive, and the program is simply not compatible with your hard disk. You cannot access the program if the Macin-





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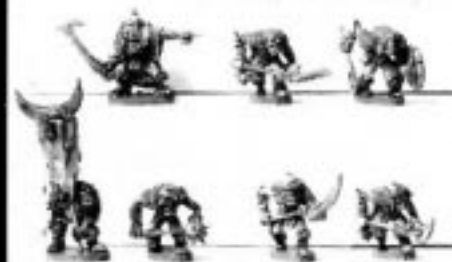
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tosh computer system boots from the hard disk, and that is not acceptable. You can reset the machine with the game disk in the internal drive, or turn off the hard disk altogether, but why should the game scramble the normal operating routine?

### **Marble Madness**

\*\*\*\*

(Apple IIGS version reviewed)

This award-winning arcade game has now been released for the Apple IIGS for \$34.95. Original versions were made for the Atari ST, IBM micros and compatibles, and the Apple IIs for \$34.95; for the Commodore 64/128 for \$29.95, and for the Commodore Amiga for \$49.95. The object of the game is to race a marble down treacherous raceways toward the goal line in an attempt to beat the clock. If you are a true arcade game aficionado, this product constitutes one of the few "must haves" for your game library.

### **Epyx, Inc.**

600 Galveston Drive  
P.O. Box 8020  
Redwood City CA 94063  
(415) 369-2999

Produced under the Maxx-Out! label, *Rad Warrior* has been released for C64/128, Apple II, and IBM computers. The player is transported to 2500 A.D., where he assumes the persona of Tal, a champion warrior who has been chosen to save the human race from enslavement by invaders from another world. The closer Tal gets to the aliens' power source, the higher the level of deadly radiation and the deadlier the foes he must deal with. The pricing is \$24.95.

*Arctic Antics: Spy vs. Spy II* game features a race for space in a rocket ship built for one. The white spy and black spy try to outsmart each other in their search for the punch card, gyroscope, fuel canister, and launch briefcase that are essential to launch the rocket ship. The game is accompanied by a comic-book-style instruction manual, *Arctic Antics: Spy vs. Spy* is available for the C64/128, Apple II, IBMs and compatibles, and Atari 800/130 computers for \$24.95.

*Boulder Dash Construction Kit* is the third offering under the Maxx-Out! label. The players can either play the game provided on the program disk or design their own games using the program's Construction Kit. The object of the game is to search through different caves and mine as many diamonds as possible while avoiding a myriad of dangers. The game is designed for the Apple II series, IBM and compatibles, Atari 800/130 and ST, and Commodore 64/128 at a pricing of \$24.95.

### **Mini-review**

#### **Street Sports Basketball**

\*\* 1/2

*Street Sports Basketball* is not your run-of-the-mill basketball simulation. This game follows through with the winner-take-all, neighborhood pick-up games

enjoyed by players of all ages that was started with the company's *Street Sports Baseball* earlier this year. You select where you want to play the pick-up game — in an alley, school yard, inner-city parking lot — then select from among 10 neighborhood players. Each player has his own special strength or weakness. Those who enjoyed the baseball game will see familiar names among those wishing to participate in the game, such as Ralph who is quick and agile, but has a cap that has a tendency to flop over his eyes just when he's about to make his shot. This is a thoroughly enjoyable and lighthearted basketball simulation that is great for players of all ages. *Street Sports Basketball* is available for the Commodore 64/128 computer, Apple II, and IBM computers. In January of 1988, an Amiga version will be published.

### **Firebird**

71 North Franklin Turnpike  
Waldwick NJ 07463  
(201) 444-5700

The company has just announced that *The Sentry* is available in Atari ST format for \$44.95. With 10,000 unique landscapes, the urgency of an ever-increasing time element, and the presence of a formidable opponent, this is a most absorbing and challenging strategy game.

### **Microprose Software**

120 Lakefront Drive  
Hunt Valley MD 21030  
(301) 771-1151

A new strategy and action simulation game has been released from MicroProse which is quite steadily becoming one of the leading war simulation developers today. Called *Airborne Ranger*, this new program invites players to control the movements of an individual soldier instead of a plane, helicopter, or submarine — the subjects of past MicroProse offerings. Beginning with a joystick-controlled parachute drop, each of the 12 desperate missions requires tactical thinking and lightning-fast reflexes for success. The search-and-destroy, rescue, infiltration, and sabotage missions take place in three different regions of the world. All require careful planning and pinpoint execution. The game is available for C64/128 computers for \$34.95, with conversions planned for IBM microcomputers and the Atari ST.

A second new offering is *Project: Stealth Fighter*, a simulation of a radar-elusive jet fighter believed to be part of the USAF arsenal. The simulation features an advanced cockpit with two multipurpose display screens, a radar scope, and three-dimensional, out-of-the-window viewing capability with a superimposed "heads up" display (HUD). Available for the C64/128, the price of this game is \$39.95. Conversions are planned for IBM micros and compatibles, and for the Atari ST.

### **Mindscape Inc.**

3444 Dundee Road  
Northbrook IL 60062  
(312) 480-7667 or -9209

*Trust and Betrayal: The Legacy of Siboot*, by Chris Crawford, author of *Balance of Power*, has been released for the Apple Macintosh. Focusing on language, personality, and power as the means to an end, players communicate with characters in an alien language as they make deals, ask and answer questions, beg, make promises, and gossip. Players strive to acquire power: the love, trust, and fear that they seize from the other characters to win the game. The price is \$49.95.

*Superstar Ice Hockey* was first; now comes *Superstar Soccer*, which re-creates the feel of the playing field, the buzz of the front office, and the hustle of the strategy room. Feinting, trapping, kicking, and juggling are just a few of the skills the player must master to become a player on a SporTime Soccer League team. You can coach and play, and hope you last out the season. Available for the C64/128 computer at a price of \$34.95, versions are also planned for the IBM PC and compatibles, the Commodore Amiga, and the Apple II family of computers.

*Thunder Mountain* is Mindscape's software label for programs that cost less than \$10. The label's first introductions include *Pac Man*, *Ms. Pac Man*, *Dig Dug*, *Pole Position*, and *Galaxian*. Other games include *Cyrus Chess* and *Top Gun*. These titles are programmed for the Commodore 645/128, IBM microcomputers, and Apple II family. The games sell for \$9.95 each. We've played several on the C64/128 and enjoyed *Ms. Pac Man* immensely.

### **Mini-review**

#### **Harrier Combat Simulator**

\*\*\*\*

(Atari ST version)

This offering is a highly challenging and extremely enjoyable Harrier-jet flight simulator. As the pilot, you must not only master flying the Harrier jet (with its versatile horizontal and vertical thrust capabilities), but learn to control its advanced weaponry as well. As the only jet fighter to survive an attack by saboteurs, you must destroy the enemy headquarters before the Sixth Fleet is destroyed! *Harrier Combat Simulator* is for the Atari ST family of computers and is one of the better recent flight simulator releases.

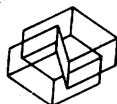
### **Origin Systems**

136 Harvey Road  
Building B  
Londonderry NH 03053  
(603) 644-3360

Finally, *Ultima IV: Quest of the Avatar* has been released for IBM micros and compatibles at \$59.95. The player explores

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new frontiers and meets new challenges. Players, however, do not design the characteristics and abilities of the party. Instead, the party takes on the player's characteristics, based on responses to a series of ethical dilemmas. The difficulty of the quest is then influenced by the player's personality.

#### Paragon Software Corp.

600 Rugh Street  
Greensburg PA 15601  
(412) 838-1166

*Master Ninja: Shadow Warrior of Death* is for IBM micros and compatibles. It is an Oriental action and adventure story that takes the player through 25 screens of ancient martial arts, including hand-to-hand and weapon combat. The player assumes the identity of a great ninja warrior on a quest to recover a magical sword stolen by an evil Japanese warlord. There are 25 martial arts moves, historic ninja weapons, and realistic sound. The price is \$34.95, with a Commodore 64/128 conversion currently being programmed. Versions for the Atari ST and Commodore Amiga should be released this year.

#### Ray & Secrest Simulations, Inc.

P.O. Box 1104  
Houston TX 77251-1104  
(713) 527-0616

A new Wizardry scenario for Apple II users has been released by these developers. Entitled *The Mazetown Coven*, this offering is for characters of levels 11 through 13, and is priced at \$15.00.

#### Strategic Simulations, Inc.

1046 North Rengstorff Avenue  
Mountain View CA 94043  
(415) 964-1353

This fine company has released two new simulations: *Sons of Liberty*, a simulation of three American Revolutionary War battles, and *Panzer Strike!*, a tactical World War II simulation. In the former, the

battles of Bunker Hill, Saratoga, and Monmouth are recreated using the award-winning game system from Gettysburg. With *Panzer Strike!*, one or two players can engage in individual squad or tank-level combat in the Eastern and North African fronts, as well as combat involving the British Army throughout Europe. Available for both Apple II and C64/128 computers, these games are \$49.95 and \$44.95 respectively.

#### The clue corner

Several marvelous clues arrived from our readers for this issue. First, Kendall Gregg writes that he has mastered the Perilous Peaks dungeon in *Might and Magic*. Kendall offers the following clues:

1. Never interrupt a dragon town meeting. Even the gods could not survive such an outpouring of anger.
2. The four beasts (soldier, sea monster, scorpion, and winged beast) are pictured on the map in the correct locations. Kill all four, then go to Tuck Island and spin the Wheel. You will get a bonus for each monster slain. Of course, this will put the monsters back in the game as well.
3. In section A4, many islands of a magical nature can be found, including a bridge that can only be crossed if each character answers a question correctly. Failure means death. To date, none of my characters have crossed the bridge.
4. The Perilous Peaks are great for dragon hunting, if you are strong enough. The Fabled City of Gold in those peaks is the best place to find magical objects (including an idol). But watch out for multiple dragon encounters that must be bested if you are to get that idol!
5. Another island of interest is Trivia Island, where you pay to guess at obscure questions based on encounters earlier in the game (questions such as, "Who is the voluptuous one?").
6. ZAM's clue is C-15, whatever that might mean.
7. Remember: **I BE ME.**
8. The code for turning off Erliquin's dungeon ZAP traps is YICUZME3.

9. Go to the Astral Plane as soon as possible. Chances are that the worst that will happen to you is that you are sent home to Sorpigal.

10. To find Ranalou's cave, follow the coast east of Portsmouth South and around the peninsula to the north.

To give you some assistance with *The Bard's Tale II*, Jeff Vogelsano of Woodbridge, Va., offers this advice:

"These clues might help those down on their luck. For two of those 'unique' weapons you always hear about, have the characters go to Garth's Shoppe. Press **Buy** and pick your weapon. Next, insert a copied character disk and **Purchase**. Press the space bar. Insert the original game disk and press **Buy**. The weapon or item will still be there.

"For those who always need gold, go to 'BEDDERS.' **Deposit** your gold, then withdraw. Before typing your code, insert a copy disk. Type the code, and BEDDER will close the account. Insert the original disk, and you will have the money and the account."

Clues for *The Bard's Tale II* players were also received from Brian Lurtice of Phoenix, Ariz.:

"Hitting the z key while playing *The Bard's Tale II* will summon a Stone Elemental. Also, many of the spell descriptions seem to be incorrect. For example, Forskar's Night Lance only travels for 70', and the Heal All does *not* cure stunned characters."

*Phantasie II* players should appreciate the following clues from Christopher Fisher of Middlebury, Vt.:

1. When trying to get to the Plane of Darkness, go to the White Castle and type C2.
2. The elemental of air has every spell possible and is very helpful when fighting Nikademos.
3. In the Dark Castle, follow these directions when the arches appear: **E, S, N, S, E, S, E, W, E, E.**
4. Break Nikademos's wand when you can, but don't sell any of the pieces.
5. Look for secret doors in the southwest portion of the last dungeon.

That's all for this month. Please remember that we need your ballots for the best software games of the year (1987 and 1988). Simply write down the name of the game, the version, and your name and address on a postcard, and send it to:

Hartley and Patricia Lesser  
179 Pebble Place  
San Ramon CA 94583

Please do not phone us! Continue sending in the hints and tips, too, and we'll make certain the best are published to help out all readers. Game on!

Q

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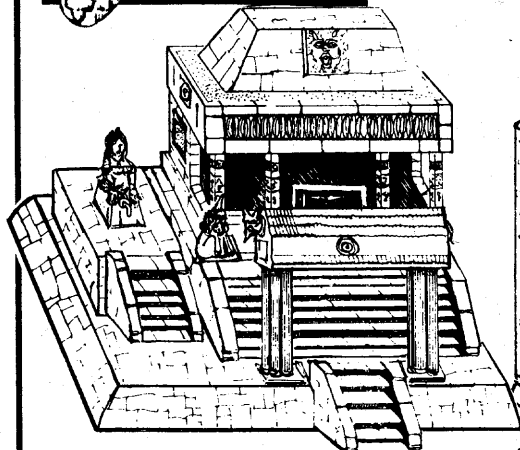
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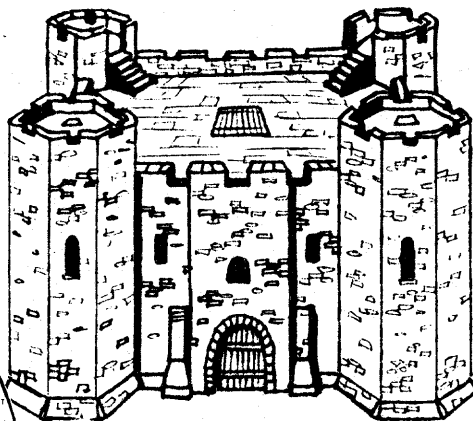
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# The Marvel®-Phile

*By the Immeasurable Girth of  
Volstagg!*

by Jeff Grubb

Thor, hero of the extradimensional realm of Asgard, is unique in that most of his allies know him as his "heroic" self, as opposed to knowing him only in whatever secret identity he maintains at the time. Spider-Man is a bit of a loner, but his alter-ego Peter Parker has had the *Daily Bugle* staff, his Aunt May, and a long string of lady-friends culminating in his bride, Mary Jane Watson, as friend and associates. It's the same with Iron Man, who operates on his own as a hero and with a huge group of friends and allies as the president



of Stark Enterprises. Even the Hulk has more friends as puny Bruce Banner than as his monstrous self.

But not Thor. Thor's old secret identity of lame Doctor Don Blake had Jane Foster as a friend, but that's about it. No, Thor's best supporting-cast members are natives of his home, Asgard: Sif, Odin, Heimdall, Balder — and Grim Hogun, Dashing Fandral, and Volstagg the Enormous.

Fair ladies and noble lords, we present the guys who stand at Thor's side in battles of Asgard: The Warriors Three.

## HOGUN THE GRIM™

F	AM	Health: 205
A	RM	
S	AM	Karma: 80
E	MN	
R	EX	Resources: IN
I	RM	
P	RM	Popularity: EX in Asgard

### KNOWN POWERS:

*Body Armor:* The massive cell structure of Asgardians provides Hogun with Good protection against physical and energy attacks.

*Hogun's Mace:* Hogun's mace is made of Amazing-strength materials, and he wields the weapon with +1 CS on attack rolls. The weapon is nonmagical, though it was built using the magic of Asgardian craftsmen, and has no special powers.

**TALENTS:** Hogun is a master in the use of his mace (as noted above), and in addition has the Horsemanship (+1 CS for all FEATS involving horses) and Martial Arts A talents.

**CONTACTS:** Hogun is a member of the Court of Asgard and, as a member of the Warriors Three, is a close friend of Thor.

**HOGUN'S STORY:** Hogun is called "the grim" for his dour attitude and pessimistic outlook. He is more of a fighter than a talker, letting his mace speak volumes in combat. Hogun is not a native of Asgard proper, but of another land in the Asgardian dimension. He has, however, proved time and again his loyalty to the throne of Asgard and to Thor, the son of Odin.

## FANDRAL THE DASHING™

F	IN	Health: 195
A	RM	
S	AM	Karma: 70
E	MN	
R	GD	Resources: RM
I	EX	
P	IN	Popularity: RM in Asgard, IN with Asgardian women

### KNOWN POWERS:

*Body Armor:* Like all Asgardians, Fandral has a dense body that provides Good protection against physical and energy attacks.

*Fandral's Sword:* Fandral's sword, like Hogun's mace, is not enchanted but is made of the strong metals wrought by the smiths of Asgard. It is made of Incredible-strength material, and Fandral fights at the Amazing level when using it. Fandral may use both the edge of his sword (for edged attacks) and the flat of the blade (for blunt attacks) in combat.

**TALENTS:** Fandral is a master of the sword (+1 CS in combat as noted above) and has the Horsemanship talent (+1 on FEATS involving riding and dealing with horses).

**CONTACTS:** As an Asgardian of note, and a good friend and ally of the mighty Thor, Fandral has the Court of Asgard, its rulers, and Thor himself as contacts. He has no real contacts on Earth.

**FANDRAL'S STORY:** Fandral is a native Asgardian who, with Hogun and Volstagg, helped Thor put down a mutiny inspired by Thor's evil and malicious brother Loki. Fandral's good looks and courtly manners make him the "lady's man" of the Warriors Three. His tendency to court several young women simultaneously has gotten him into deep trouble, and he has fore-sworn his philandering life for the time being. Whether he keeps to this vow when confronted by the comely maidens of Asgard remains to be seen.

## VOLSTAGG THE ENORMOUS™

F	RM	Health: 250
A	EX	
S	AM	Karma: 60
E	Shift X	
R	GD	Resources: RM
I	GD	
P	IN	Popularity: IN in Asgard if he's paid his bar bill; RM otherwise

### KNOWN POWERS:

*Body Armor:* Volstagg has the natural body density of most Asgardians, and in addition has much more "body" than usual to serve as armor. Volstagg's exact weight is a tightly held secret in the circles of Asgard, but may be safely said to be over one ton, depending on whether he has just walked away from a big meal or not. His flesh serves as Excellent armor against physical and energy attacks.

**TALENTS:** Volstagg was a mighty swordsman in his prime, and still has the Swordsman and Wrestling talents. Volstagg uses his incredible girth to his advantage in combat, and a successful wrestling hold usually indicates that the massive Asgardian is sitting on his opponent.

**CONTACTS:** Volstagg maintains the same contacts as Fandral and Hogun, and in

addition has met and befriended Sunspot of the New Mutants and the young group Power Pack.

**VOLSTAGG'S STORY:** Long ago (by Asgardian time; by the way mere mortals figure time, it was long, long, long ago), Volstagg was among the most powerful fighters in the land, earning him the title "Lion of Asgard." Many centuries of feasting and drinking have spread his waistline, if not his fame, to even greater dimensions. He still asserts himself to be one of the premier warriors of Asgard, but in combat he seeks less-strenuous forms of conflict than direct attack. When storming a castle, for example, his first point of attack is the larder, to see if any enemies are hiding among the breads, cheeses, and meats. Volstagg is no coward, however, nor is he unwilling to confront opponents, as many a young Asgardian gallant has discovered when he challenged the Lion and was sat upon after a short scuffle.

In a short trip to Earth, Volstagg made the acquaintance of the children in the Power Pack, and he knows their true identities. He has also adopted into his large and child-filled home two Earth boys who lost their mother to an enemy of Thor. Volstagg has a large family, and though he loves each and every one of them a great deal, he finds that he must escape domestic confines in the cause of high adventure. Of course, he must explain this to his wife upon his return.

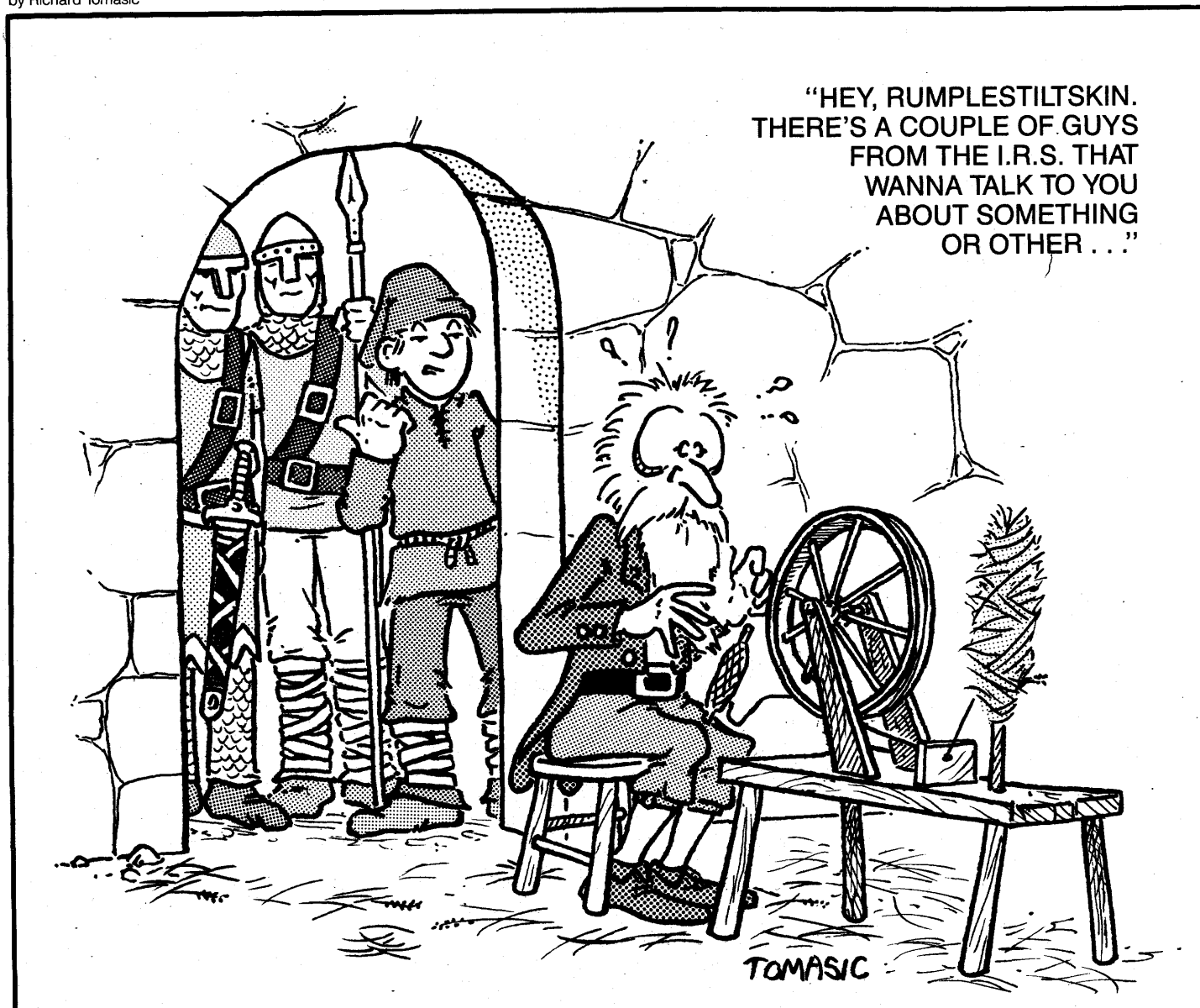
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# DRAGONMIRTH



by Richard Tomasic

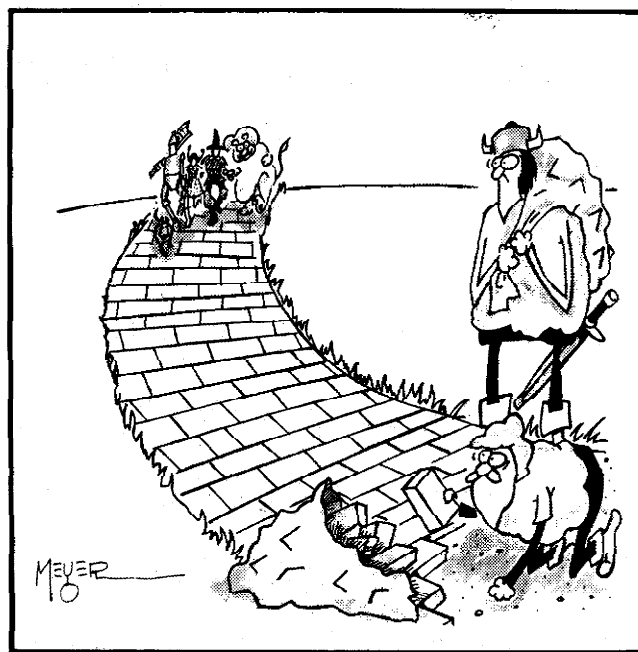


"HEY, RUMPLESTILTSKIN.  
THERE'S A COUPLE OF GUYS  
FROM THE I.R.S. THAT  
WANNA TALK TO YOU  
ABOUT SOMETHING  
OR OTHER ..."

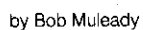
TOMASIC



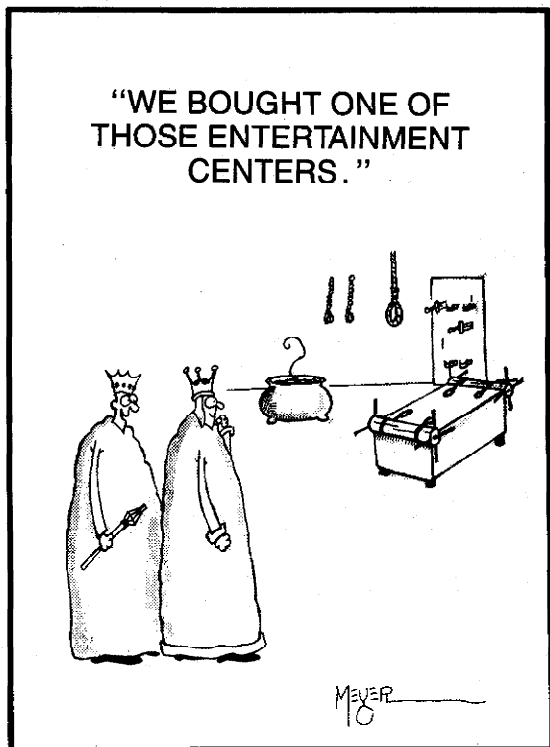
by Bruce Simpson



by Dwain Meyer



by Joseph Pillsbury



# CONVENTION CALENDAR

## Convention Calendar Policies

This column is offered as a service to our readers around the world. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines **must** be observed.

In order to ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be either typed double-spaced or printed legibly on 8½" x 11" paper. The contents of each listing should be short, succinct, and under 150 words long.

The information given in the listing **must** include the following information, in the following order:

1. Convention title and dates held;
2. Site and location;
3. Guests of honor (if applicable);
4. Special events offered;
5. Registration fees or attendance requirements; and,
6. Address(es) and telephone number(s) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, brochures, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted. Domestic and foreign conventions are welcome.

**WARNING:** We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Our wide circulation ensures that over a quarter of a million readers see each issue. Accurate information is your responsibility!

Convention listings should be mailed by the copy deadline date to Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 110, Lake Geneva WI 53147. Copy deadline dates are the last Monday of each month, two months prior to the on-sale date of an issue. For example, the copy deadline for the July 1988 issue is the last Monday of May 1988. Plan ahead; early listings pay off!

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, **please contact us immediately!** For any questions or changes related to this column, please call either Robin Jenkins or Roger E. Moore at TSR, Inc., (414) 248-3625.

floor of the University of Toledo Main Campus Student Union in Toledo, Ohio. This convention will feature a host of events, including a games auction, a miniatures-painting contest, a game exhibitors' and dealers' room, an RPGA™ Network AD&D® game tournament, a CAR WARS® tournament, a schedule of movies, and more than 120 other role-playing, board, and miniatures gaming features. Steve Jackson is the guest of honor. Send an SASE to: Student Activities Office, UT-BASH, BASHCON, 2801 W. Bancroft Street, Toledo OH 43606; or call: (419) 537-4654.

## JAXCON SOUTH 12, March 4-6

This 12th annual gaming convention will be held at the Jacksonville Hotel on the Riverwalk in Jacksonville, Fla. Miniatures, board game, and role-playing game events will be held, with a large dealers' room, a flea market, tournaments, movies, door prizes, and more. Registration is \$18 at the door. Dealers should write to: JAXCON SOUTH 12, Dept. D., P.O. Box 4423, Jacksonville FL 32201. Write to: JAXCON SOUTH, Dept. A., P.O. Box 4423, Jacksonville FL 32201; or call: (904) 772-9040 between 7 and 9 P.M. only.

## CALCON III, March 11-13

This role-playing, board, and miniatures-gaming convention will be held at the Glenmore Inn in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Sponsored events include a major AD&D® tournament (\$250 first-place prize offered), TUNNELS & TROLLS™ games, a Monty Hall Bake-off Extraganza, CALL OF CTHULHU® games, and a host of minor tournaments. Other events include an auction, miniatures competitions, a miniatures-painting contest, LAZER TAG® games, intros and demos of many RPG systems, and more. Registration is \$7 until March 1, or \$10 thereafter. Write to: CALCON III, P.O. Box 204, Station "M," 220 4th Avenue SE, Calgary, Alberta, CANADA, T2P 2H6.

## TOTAL CONFUSION 2, March 11-13

The second-annual TOTAL CONFUSION game convention will be held at Clark University in Worcester, Mass. RPGA™ Network events will be held for AD&D® and CALL OF CTHULHU® games. Regular events include 10 "unlimited" AD&D® game events, and CHAMPIONS™, DCTM™ HEROES, CAR WARS®, and numerous other board and role-playing game features. A miniatures-painting event, a dealers' room, seminars, 24-hour open gaming, and much more are also offered. Preregistration for all three days is \$15, or \$6 for each individual day. Registration after March 1 is \$7 per day. Write to: TOTAL CONFUSION, 151 Chandler Street, Worcester MA 01609; or call: (617) 793-0853, (617) 562-2554, or (617) 755-4207.

## UMF-CON, March 13

This science-fiction, fantasy, and gaming convention takes place at the Student Center of the University of Maine in Farmington, Maine. Barry B. Longyear, the nationally known science-fiction writer, will be attending. UMF-

CON features AD&D®, TOP SECRET®, RISK®, and BATTLESYSTEM™ game events, along with numerous other board and role-playing games. Registration is \$5; each game requires a \$2 entry fee. Write to: Table Gaming Club, c/o Student Life Office, Student Center, South Street, Farmington ME 04938.

## DRACONIS, March 18-20

This science-fiction and fantasy convention will be held at the Galt House in Louisville, Ky. Anne McCaffrey will be the guest of honor, and Julia Ecklar will be fan guest. Featured events will include the Dragon Bazaar, open gaming, filksinging, a masquerade contest, an art show and auction, panels, workshops, a LAZER TAG™ area, and a child-care center. Registration fees are \$20. Children ages 6-12 may be registered for half price. Write to: DRACONIS, P.O. Box 162, Concord MA 01742.

## SIMCON X, March 18-20

This convention will be held in the Wilson Commons on the University of Rochester's River Campus in Rochester, N.Y. Events include role-playing game tournaments, wargames, miniatures competitions, movies, demonstrations, and a dealers' room. Registration is \$5 before March 1, and \$10 thereafter. Write to: SIMCON X, P.O. Box 29142, River Station, Rochester NY 14627; or by calling: (716) 275-9379.

## THE SPRING OFFENSIVE, March 19-20

Sponsored by the Tri-County Gaming Association, this gaming convention will be held at the Bradley University campus in Peoria, Ill. Featured events will include a variety of role-playing games, board games, and miniatures events. Registration fees are \$2 per day, or \$3 for the weekend, with an additional charge of \$1 for each event entered. Write to: Jim Roots, 2270 Robin Road, Washington IL 61571; or call: (309) 745-8511.

## AGGLECON 19, March 24-27

The Southwest's largest science-fiction and fantasy convention will be held on the Texas A&M campus in College Station, Tex. Guests of honor include Joe Haldeman (*not* Gene Roddenberry, as earlier noted), Katherine Kurtz, Bob Eggleton, and Kerry O'Quinn. Events include the Quest, open gaming, 25 authors and artists, nine SF films in 35mm (to be shown in a 2,500-seat auditorium), a dealers' room with over 100 tables, an art show and auction, a banquet, a masquerade ball, and more. Preregistration fees are \$10 for all four days (if paid prior to February 28), with an additional \$4 charge for entry into the Quest. At-the-door fees are \$5 for one day, \$14 for the entire weekend, \$1 for the midnight movie, \$10 for a banquet ticket, and \$5 for entry into the Quest. Children under three are admitted free of charge, and children ages 3-12 for half the normal registration fees. Students of Texas A&M are entitled to discounts on AGGIECON passes. For details, write to: AGGIECON 19, TAMU, Box J-1, MSC, College Station TX 77844.

## MAGNUM OPUS CON 3, March 25-27

This science-fiction, fantasy, and gaming convention will be held in Columbus, Ga. Guests of honor include Yvonne Craig, Michael Bishop, Charles N. Brown, Hal Clement, Catherine and L. Sprague de Camp, Stephen R. Donaldson, Lloyd A. Eshbach, Phillip Jose Farmer, George R.R. Martin, Norman Spinrad, Jack Williamson, and others yet to be announced. Activities include gaming tournaments, an art show, a magic show, an open talent show, a dance, an

\* indicates Canadian convention.

• indicates European convention.

## BASHCON '88, March 4-6

Sponsored by the University of Toledo Benevolent Adventurers' Strategic Headquarters, this sixth annual event will be held on the third

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art auction, a con suite, and movie rooms. Write to: MAGNUM OPUS CON, 4315 Pio Novo Avenue, Macon GA 31206.

#### **ROUNDCON III, March 25-27**

This fantasy and super-hero role-playing games convention will be held at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, S.C. Gaming will take place on the third floor of the Russell House Student Center on Greene Street in downtown Columbia. Convention hours are as follows: 3 P.M. to midnight on Friday, 9 A.M. to midnight on Saturday, and 12:30 P.M. to 6 P.M. on Sunday. Featured games will be CHAMPIONS™ and the AD&D® game, with prizes being awarded to the top players in both games. Miscellaneous other role-playing and strategy games will also be featured. Preregistration by mail is required. Memberships are \$5 and may be paid by checks made out to: Roundtable, A Gaming Society. Checks must be postmarked no later than March 18. Membership fees may be mailed to: ROUNDCON III, P.O. Box 80018, University of South Carolina, Columbia SC 29225. Call: Wally at (803) 777-1964.

#### **CONTEST V, March 31-April 3**

Tulsa's only all-gaming convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Holidome at 8181 E. Skelly Drive in Tulsa, Okla. Events will include game tournaments, demonstrations, role-playing games, board games, computer games, miniatures competitions, live games, free gaming, a continuous video room, dealers' room, auction, and special guests. Registration fees are \$6 before March 1, and \$8 at the door. Write to: CONTEST V, P.O. Box 4726, Tulsa OK 74104.

#### **BAMACON II, April 8-10**

This gaming convention will be held at the Stagecoach Inn, located at 4810 Skyland Blvd. E. in Tuscaloosa, Ala. Room rates are \$21.75 for a single and \$27.20 for a double. Special guests include Allen Hamack, Dr. Ed Passerini, Dr. Kendrick, Jim Birdseye, Dr. Lloyd Snerts, and others. The festivities planned include workshops, seminars, and panels dealing with subjects such as science fiction, gaming, inventions, metaphysics, and computers. Gaming tournaments (as well as computer-gaming tournaments) will be held, most of which will offer cash prizes. Featured events include an art show, a costume contest, a combat-techniques seminar, miniatures combat, four 24-hour movie rooms, an awards banquet, and a 24-hour con suite. There will be filksinging, storytelling, open gaming, and more. Write to: BAMACON II, University of Alabama, P.O. Box 6542, Tuscaloosa AL 35486; or call: (205) 758-4577.

#### **CAPCON XI, April 8-10**

The Ohio State University Miniatures and Gaming Association (OSUMGA) announces the 11th annual CAPCON, to be held in both ballrooms of the Ohio Union, 1739 N. High Street, in Columbus, Ohio. Featured events include: miniatures events, board games, and role-playing games from several time periods and genres; several AD&D® and BATTLESYSTEM™ game tournaments; and, a miniatures-painting contest. Convention times are: April 8th, 5:00 P.M. to 11:30 P.M.; April 9th, 9:00 A.M. to 11:30 P.M.; and, April 10th, 12:30 A.M. to 10:30 P.M. Admission is \$3 per day. Write to: OSUMGA/CAPCON, Box 21, The Ohio Union, 1739 N. High Street,

Columbus OH 43210; or call: Jill Moody at (614) 299-5658, or Jon Kimmich at (614) 447-1705.

#### **DRAGON QUEST VI, April 8-10**

This gaming, fantasy, and science-fiction convention will be held at the University of Wyoming Union Building in Laramie, Wyo. Featured games include AD&D®, CAR WARS®, CHAMPIONS™, STAR TREK®, and TRAVELLER®. Other events include a writers' panel, a custom-game design and creation panel, computer gaming, electronic music, and more. The guest of honor will be Jerry Oltion, author of "Frame of Reference" and miscellaneous short stories. Preregistration fees are \$9 until March 26, and \$12 thereafter. Write to: Knights of Enchantment, P.O. Box 3625, Laramie WY 82071; or call: (307) 755-4721.

#### **GAME FAIRE '88, April 8-10**

The ninth-annual GAME FAIRE convention will be held at Spokane Falls Community College in Spokane, Wash. Events will run continuously from Friday night to Sunday afternoon. The program includes game tournaments, microarmor, historical miniatures, a video room, a dealers' room, SF and fantasy RPGs, board games, family games, and a game auction. The local chapter of the SCA will also host a demonstration. Registration for this convention is \$10 prepaid or \$12 at the door. Friday-only or Sunday-only passes are \$5; Saturday-only passes are \$6. All profits from this event go to the Wishing Star Foundation, a local charity dedicated to helping needy children. Write to: Merlyn's, W. 201 Riverside, Spokane WA 99201; or call: (509) 624-0957.

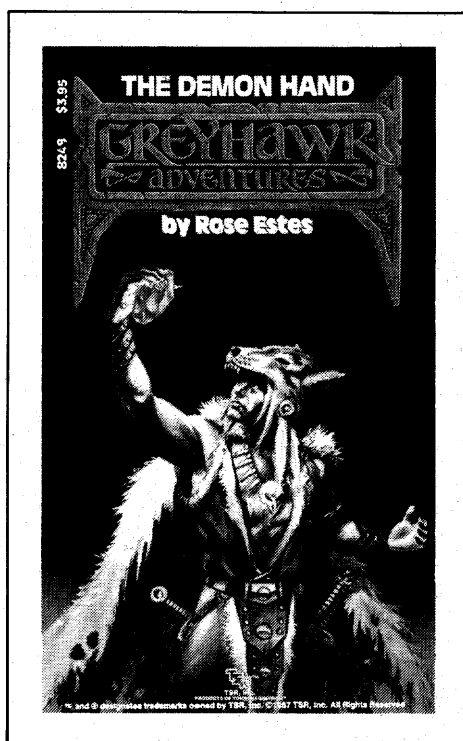
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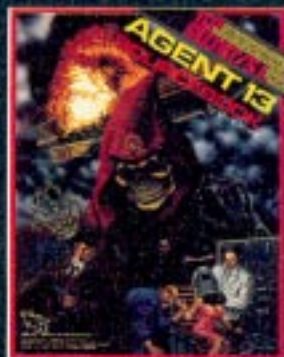
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## GAMESFAIR 88, April 8-10

The United Kingdom's premier game-playing event and the eighth GAMESFAIR organized by TSR, UK, will be held at Reading University in Reading, United Kingdom. Events will include an AD&D® game open championship, an AD&D® game team competition, a CHASE™ game tournament, a huge game of EN GARDE, a creature-creation competition, all-night gaming, a charity marathon, game demonstrations, and more. Tickets for the full three days are £37.00 residential, or £12.50 nonresidential. Write to: The Organisers, GAMESFAIR 88, TSR UK Ltd., The Mill, Rathmore Road, Cambridge CB1 4AD UNITED KINGDOM; or call: (0223) 212517.

## MISCONCEPTION, TOO, April 8-10

This gaming convention will be held at the Auraria Student Center on 9th and Larimer in Denver, Colo. Featured events include AD&D®, BATTLETECH®, CHAMPIONS™, and STAR FLEET BATTLES game events among others. Preregistration is \$3; at-the-door fees are \$4. Tournament fees are \$1 for each event. Write to: AGC, Metro State College, 1006 11th Street, Box 39, Denver CO 80204; or call: (303) 556-3320.

## S.T. CON '88, April 8-10

This gaming convention will be held at the Marlborough Inn, 1316 33rd Street NE, in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Guests include Bjo, John, and Lora Trimble; Sonni and Dr. Ralph Cooper; Diane Carey; and Gregory Brodeur. Special events include an art show and auction, a costume contest, a short-story competition, a STAR TREK®: THE RPG tournament, a STAR FLEET BATTLES tournament, and

numerous mini-competitions. Registration is \$25 before April 7, or \$30 at the door. Single-day registration may be purchased for \$15 a day. RPG tournament fees are \$5 per player; STAR FLEET BATTLES tournament fees are \$2 per player. Write to: S.T. CON '88, Unit #38, 3223 83rd Street NW, Calgary, Alberta, CANADA, T3B 2P9.

## GAMEMASTER '88, April 9

Sponsored by the Gamemasters Guild, this one-day gaming convention will be held on Saturday, April 9, from 8 a.m. to midnight in the Big Four Room of the Student Union Building on the Boise State University in Boise, Idaho. Cash prizes will be awarded in the ZOMAX game, and product prizes will be awarded in other categories. WARHAMMER, AXIS & ALLIES™, SHOGUN, D&D® games, and a host of other events will also be featured. Preregistration is \$4 until April 1; thereafter, registration is \$8. Send an SASE to: Gamemasters Guild, ATTN: Scott Brough, 5240 Targee, Boise ID 83705; or call: Ken Brough at (208) 384-5549.

## SHOW-ME CON III, April 9-10

Sponsored by the I'm Game gaming store and gamers guild, this midwest gaming event will take place at the Dance Hall in Warrensburg, Mo. Events will include AD&D®, D&D®, MARVEL SUPER HEROES®, TALISMAN, STAR WARRIORS, Visual Dungeon, BATTLETECH®, and ROLEMASTER™ games, with a figure-painting contest. The AD&D® game tournament will be run by a TSR staff writer. RPGA™ Network sponsored events, game demonstrations, a dealers' area, and a comic book show and sale

are also featured. Door prizes and other giveaways will also be offered at the door. Registration is \$7.50 in advance or \$10 at the door. Write to: I'M GAME/SHOW, 102 W. Pine Street, Warrensburg MO 64093; or call: (816) 747-DICE on Saturdays only.

## WIZARDCON '88, April 9

Sponsored by the Columbia University Games Club, this all-day convention will be held at Ferris Booth Hall at Columbia University, 115th Street and Broadway in New York City. Events will include numerous role-playing events, a DIPLOMACY® tournament, a miniatures-painting contest, a plethora of vendors, and several other games. Registration is \$2 at the door; tournament events will cost an additional \$2 per round. Write to: WIZARDCON '88, 206 Ferris Booth Hall, Columbia University, New York NY 10027.

## GICON X, April 15-17

This gaming convention will be held at the Ramada Inn in Grand Island, Nebr. Numerous gaming events are sponsored, including events in the following games: AD&D®, TRAVELLER®, ELFQUEST, TOP SECRET®, MARVEL SUPER HEROES®, and BATTLETECH®. There will also be an artists' and authors' competition, with well over \$1,000 being offered in these and other events. Registration is \$10 for the weekend if paid before March 31, or \$15 thereafter. Send an SASE to: GICON X, 3077 S. 40th Street, Omaha NE 68105.

Ω

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# SNARFQUEST. #55 BY ELMORE

OHM GOSH! THAT DEMON  
THREW SNARF IN THE  
CANYON!

GOOD GRIEF!



SPLAT

A LEDGE!!

AVEEARE, HE'S GONE!  
HE'S DEAD F'SURE... OH,  
I LOVED THAT LIL' BRAVE  
TOUGH DUDE

WAIT, I-I THINK I  
SEE HIS FINGERS  
I CAN SEE IN THE  
DARK Y'KNOW.

FINGERS?  
OH NO!



(SOB)  
WHY, OH WHY,  
(SOB) (SNIFF)

SSNNAARRFFF!



DON'T JUS' STAND  
UP DERE WITH YA  
TEETH IN YER MOUTH!  
GET ME OUTTA  
HERE!!

SNARF!

HE'S  
ALIVE!



I CAN'T  
SEE VERY  
GOOD.

WE'LL GET A LIGHT!  
AND SOME ROPE.

YEAH, I THINK I'M  
ON A LIL' TINY  
LEDGE...



LATER...

DO YOU  
SEE THE  
ROPE?

YEP I GOT  
IT. HEY, I'LL  
BE UP DERE  
INA JIFFY.



HEH  
HEH.

CHOMP

@\*#!

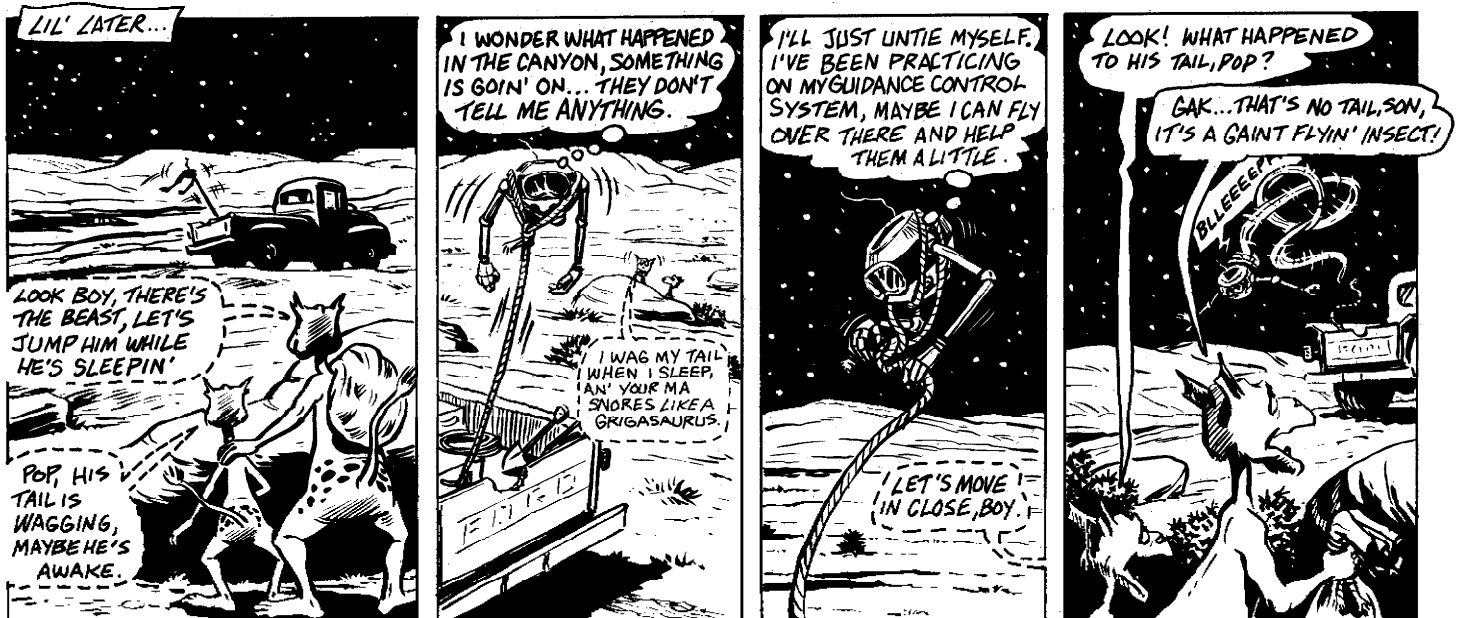


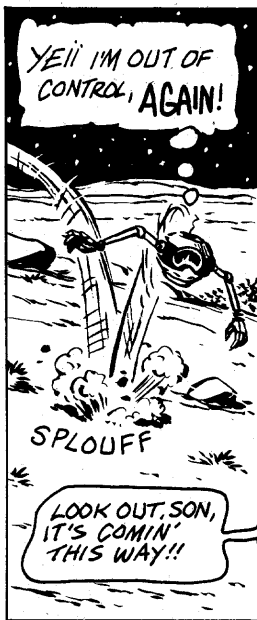
WHAT HAPPENED?

DAT @\*#! DIRT  
DEVIL BIT DA ROPE  
IN HALF!!

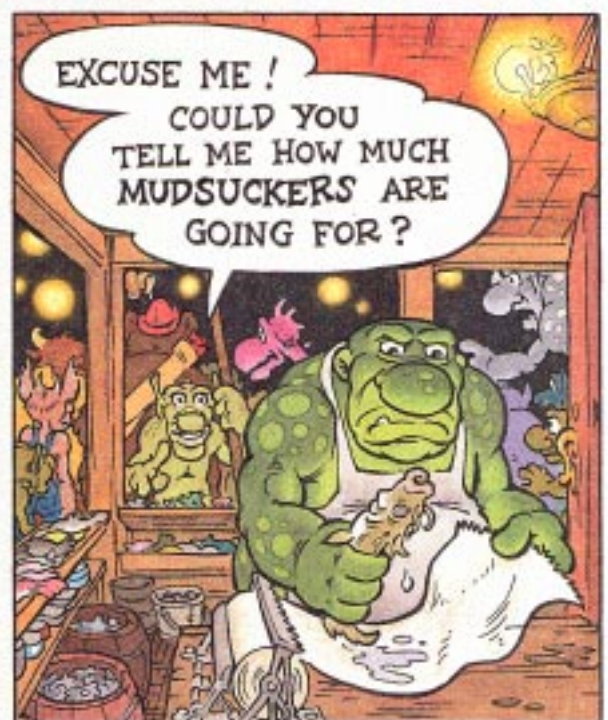
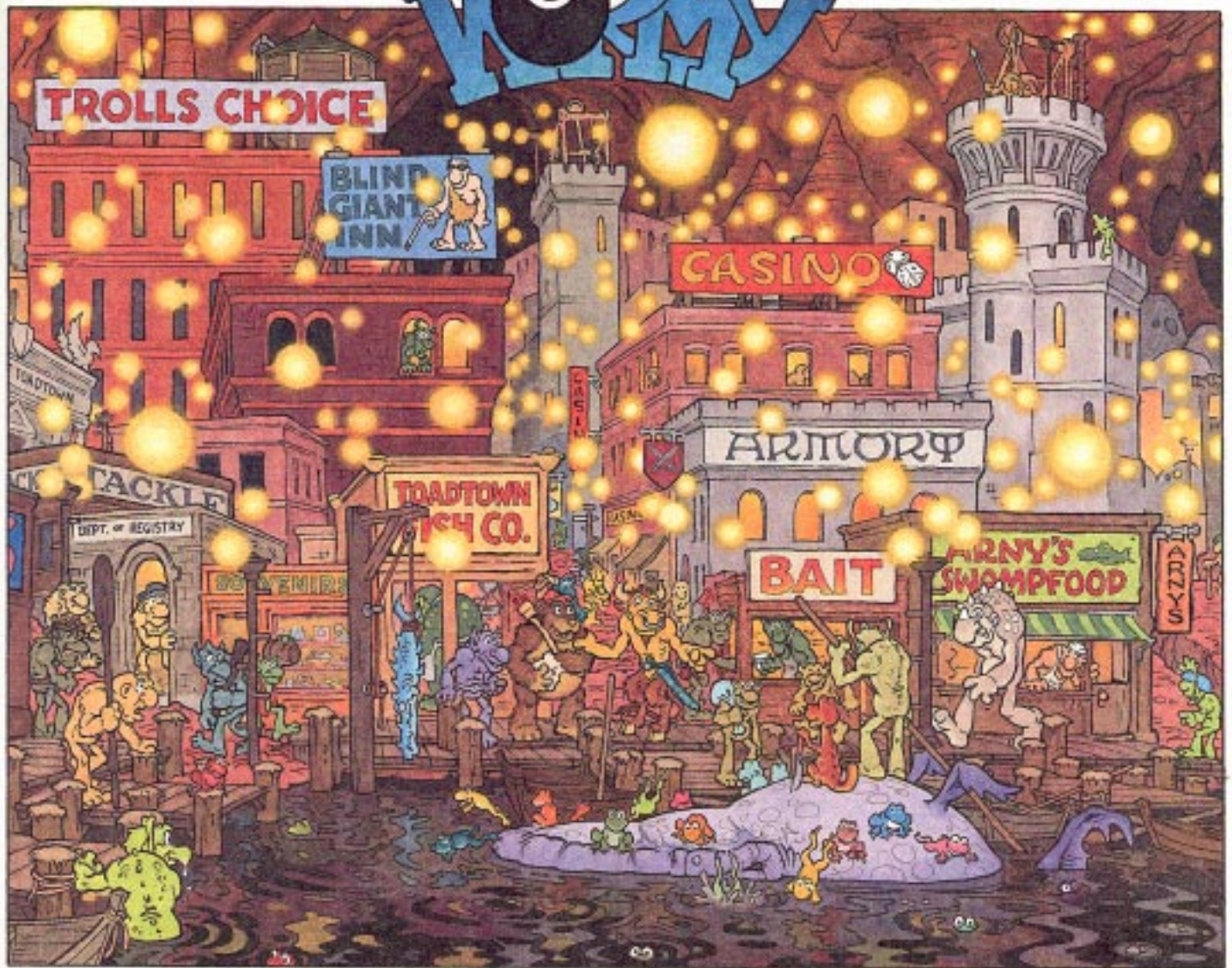


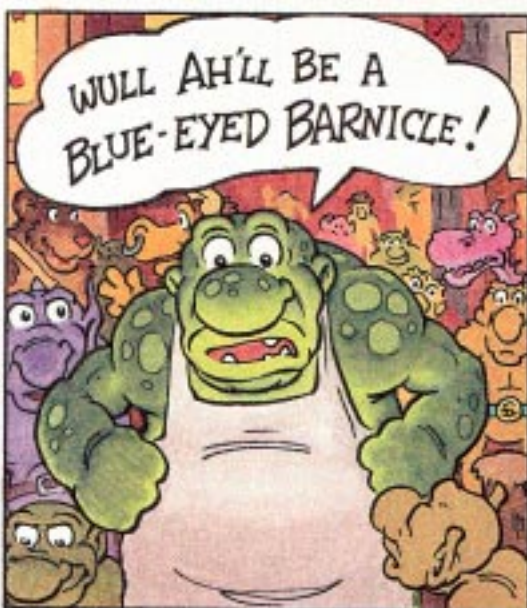
DON'T WORRY, WE HAVE  
PLENTY OF ROPE.

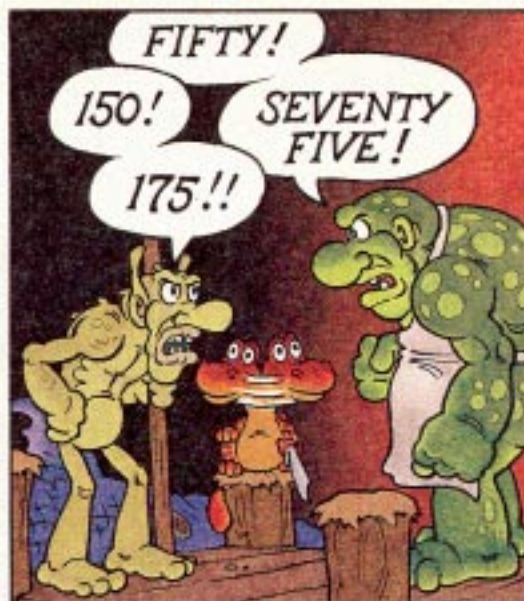
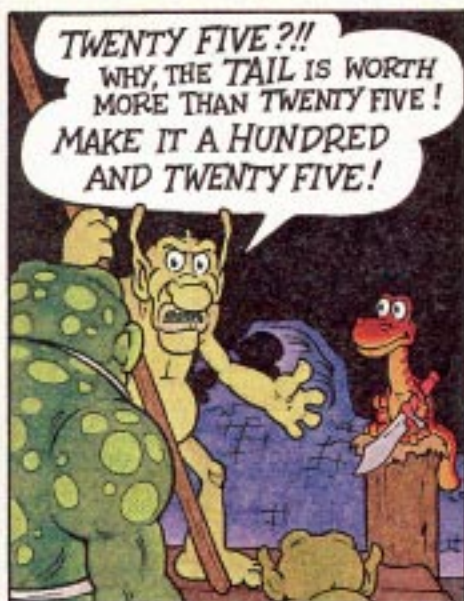




# WORMY

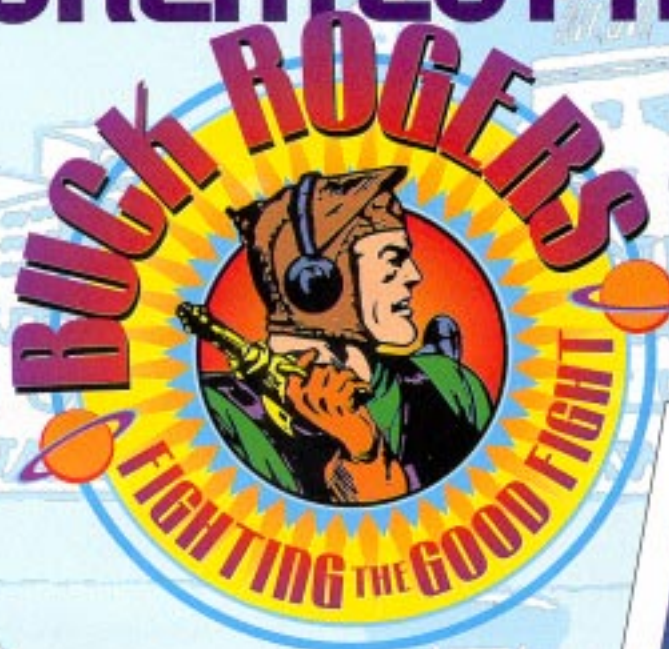




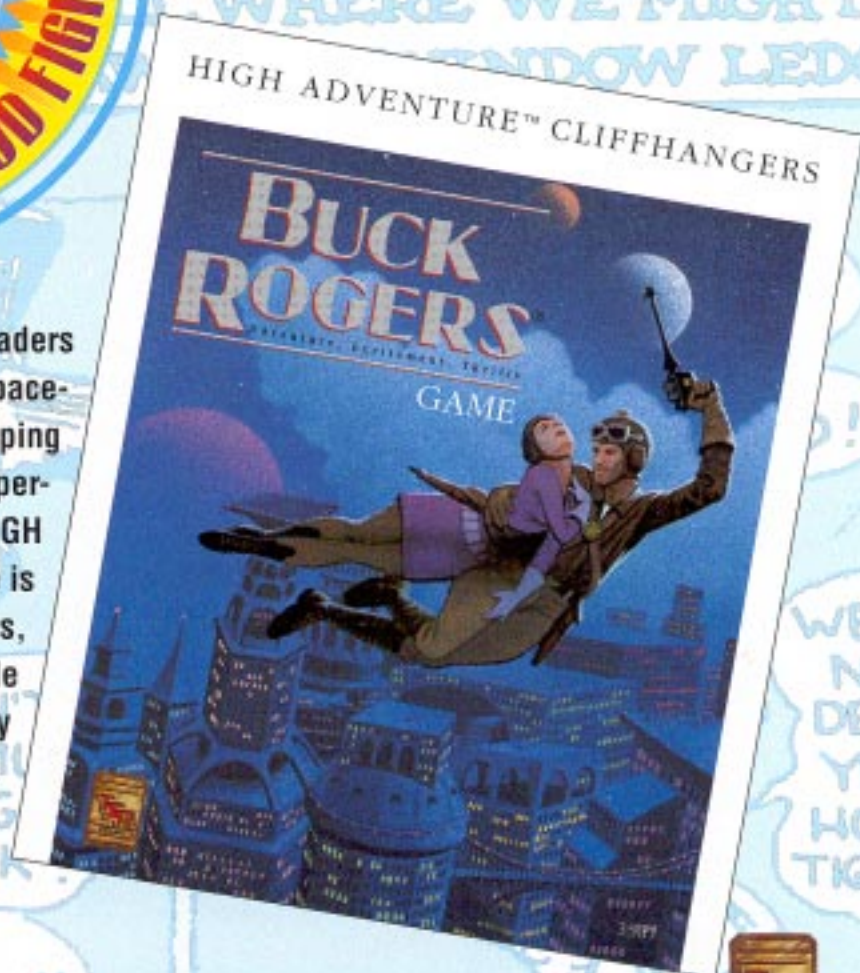




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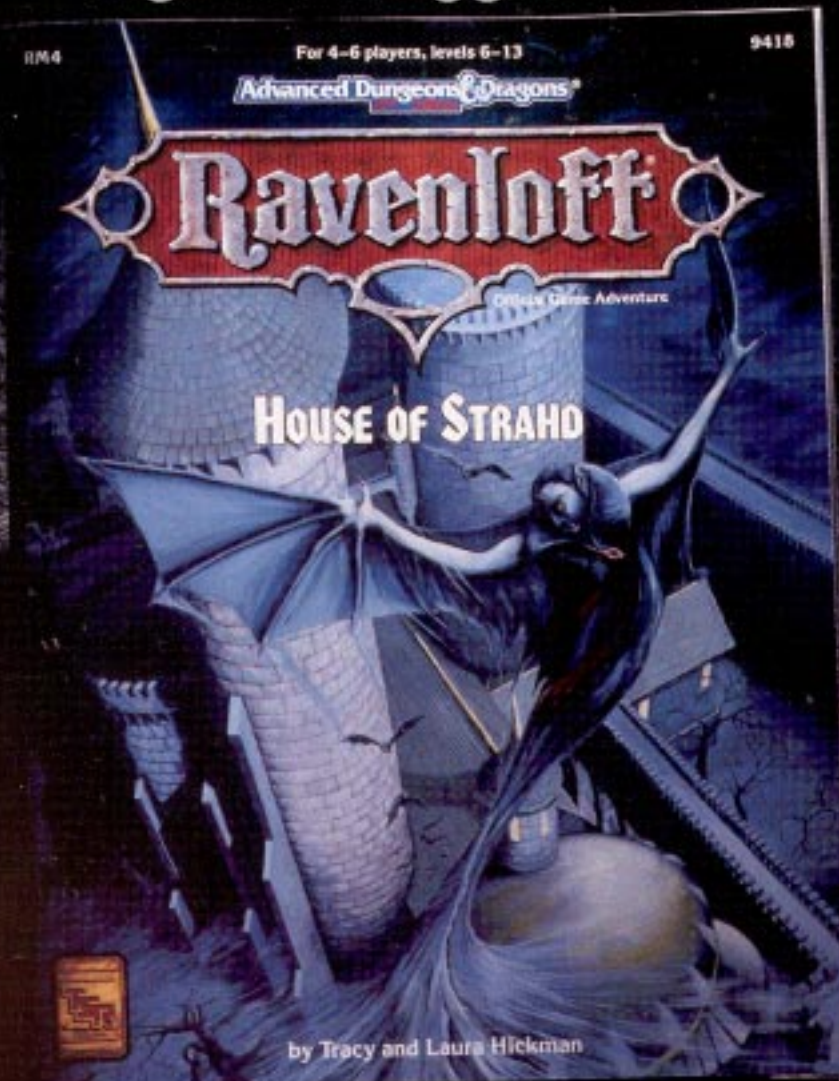


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